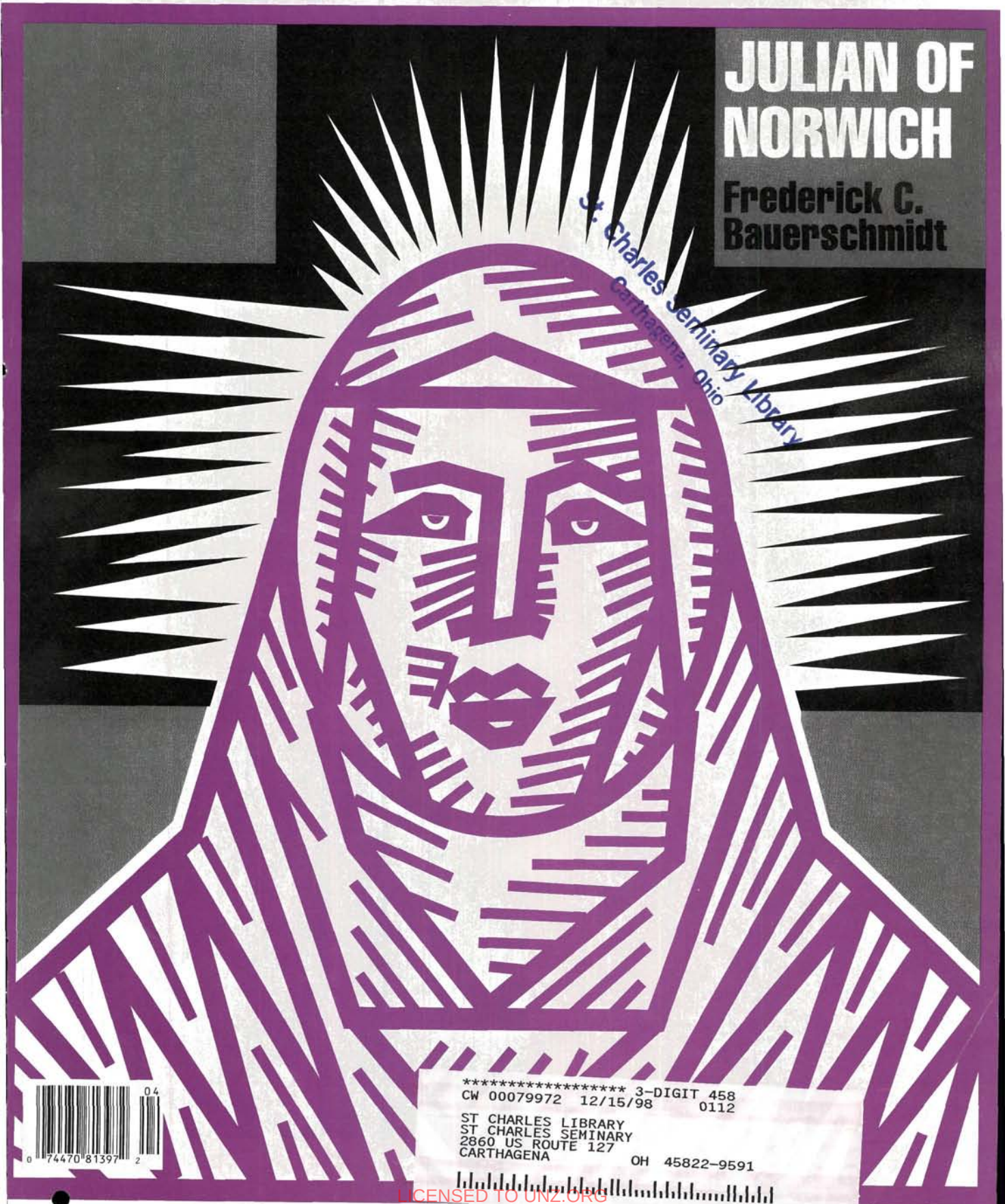
$2.25 February 27, 1998

# COMMONWEAL



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# Don't Blame The Bartender

## *Tonight Was a Long Time Coming*

Could this priest be heading for his car? Let's hope not. Clearly, he's drunk and he'd be putting in harm's way not only himself, but every occupant of every car on the road he drives.

Maybe he intends to walk. In which case, he might very well meet members of his congregation along the way. They can't fail to notice his unsteady gait and unfocused eyes. Will they feel shock or disappointment? More likely, what they'll feel is a sudden sense of abandonment.

Who's to blame? Alcoholism is a disease. The victim seldom is able to shake its tenacious grasp without a helping hand. Think about it. Didn't you notice, or at least suspect, ***before*** tonight, that Father had a chemical dependency problem? What steps have you taken?

## *One Out of Ten*

Chemical dependency is a problem so widespread that at least ten percent of the Catholic clergy is afflicted. The popular impression is that men who are not treated are left to suffer the horrid consequences alone. That's simply not true. They don't suffer alone. Members of their dioceses fall victims, too.

If this priest decides tonight to drive in his impaired condition and has a serious accident, it could cost his diocese tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees and lawsuits – programs will have to be eliminated, parish improvements canceled, needy people deprived.

Shame shared.

## *You Need to Act Now*

Time and time again, the court says, "They're your employees. You're responsible." ***If they get in an accident, the diocese is going to pay.***

As for those parishioners the priest may encounter if he instead decides to walk – no monetary system can repay the damage done them.

## *No Priest Is an Island*

In the end, of course, it's not a moral issue for the alcoholic, but for you. We're only following our Faith in giving troubled clergy the "hand up" they require to continue their work with success and sobriety. They need us. More importantly, we need them. Denial by the priest or deacon is generally part of the problem, so contact us at Guest House for help on how to proceed. Call now. We are able to provide a complete spiritual, psychological and medical evaluation at no charge.

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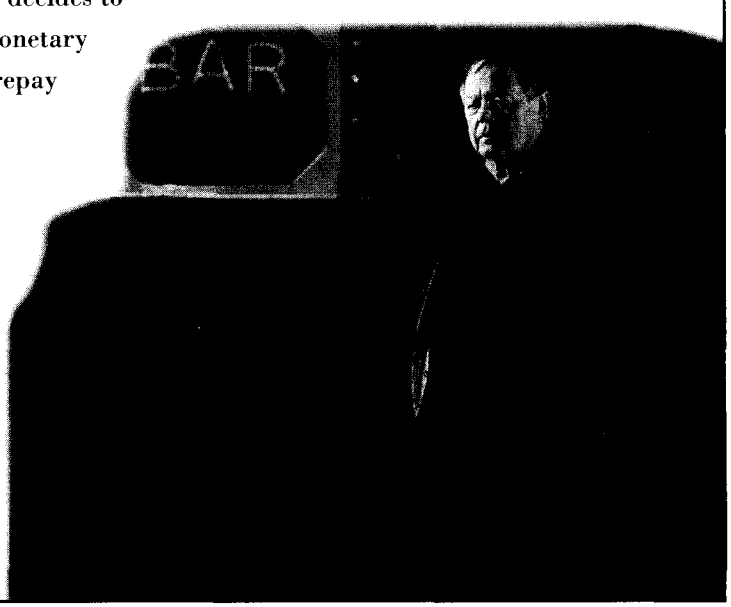


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# COMMONWEAL

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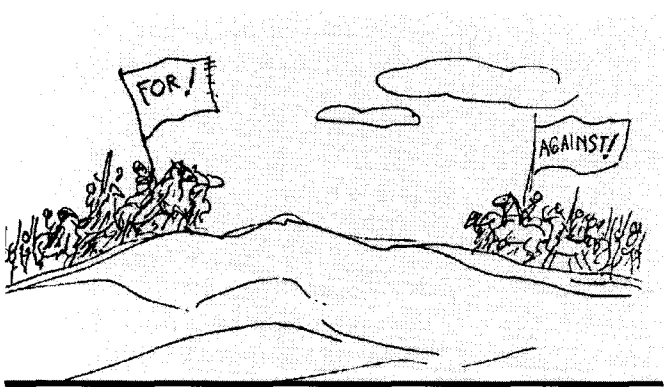


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## To the Editors

### Consumer survey

To balance January 30's "Fourteen Reports from the Pews" (an excellent set of pieces), may I suggest that *Commonweal* follow up with interviews, à la Studs Terkel, with those in the pews—such as "those who drifted in late, who sat with dully blank faces, who didn't sing hymns"; or with "the Hispanic mother, a black woman who could have been a model, an aged Irishman...." Such a survey would, I believe, "help us better understand what American Catholics [in the pews] believe today."

BROTHER THOMAS MORE, C.F.X.
*Louisville, Ky.*

### Warm liturgy in Hawaii

In response to your "reports from the pews" [January 30], I want to describe a liturgy my husband and I experienced at Sacred Heart Church in the small town of Naalehu on the Big Island of Hawaii on January 18. We have never felt so welcomed anywhere else. The pastor, young Father Stephen Macedo, with his shaved head and bare feet, could have passed for a karate instructor but for his chasuble. But he was something special. He greeted us as we entered, showed us to an empty pew, and gave us the song sheets of the day. Before starting Mass he invited visitors to say who we were and where we came from; then the altar boy put leis made of seashells around the necks of the visitors to this very small community (fewer than forty people in the church).

Father Macedo's homily was timely, appropriate to the readings, made use of his own experiences of growing up on a farm, and was keyed to the interests of the mostly Hawaiian congregation. The lectors, an Asian man and a Caucasian woman, read slowly and well. The hymns (traditional) were sung with enthusiasm.

After the homily, Father Macedo invited the children—about a dozen, from toddler to pre-teen—to stand close to the altar, where they watched him with rapt attention. At the moment of consecration, the priest whispered loudly to "please bow," but I peeked beneath my bow to see him not only genuflect on both knees but bow almost to the floor; the Presence was certainly Real to him. Women were the eucharistic ministers; everyone received, and everything was done with great reverence. At the kiss of peace almost everyone came over to hug us and welcome us again.

I find it very hopeful that priests like this are working the field, with such devotion but so close to the people they serve. It bodes well for the future of our church, and for our grandchildren.

DONNA M. MIROCHA
*Saint Paul, Minn.*

### Alleva on Duvall

Richard Alleva's excellent review of *The Apostle* [January 16] is almost as good as Robert Duvall's extraordinary film. With the insight and precision of language we have come to expect from him, Alleva articulates for us feelings we may have experienced during the movie but are less able to put into words. I disagree with none of his observations but wish to add two footnotes. First, though Alleva is correct in noting the change in cinematic style halfway through *The Apostle*—from powerful psychological drama to near-documentary (what he calls a "stylistic fissure")—this switch is necessary to give viewers a real flavor of evangelism. The image of screen evangelists provided by Burt Lancaster's Elmer Gantry and more recently Steve Martin's bogus preacher-healer in *Leap of Faith* is so negative that moviegoers' faith may be challenged in seeing a film present a sincere and effective evangelist.

Second, Duvall's performance, as Alleva notes, will dominate people's minds as they leave theaters, but even more impressive to me (and perhaps inseparable from the performance) is the film's serious and admiring attitude toward religious faith. In the contemporary movie world, this itself may be a minor miracle.

(REV.) ROBERT E. LAUDER
*Jamaica, N.Y.*

*The writer is professor of philosophy at Saint John's University.*

### Historical criticism

Some brief observations relative to Luke Timothy Johnson's article [January 16] on Catholic biblical scholarship:

1. I know of no Catholic biblical scholar who would deny "biblical texts having multiple meanings." Indeed, multiple meanings are practically a hermeneutical commonplace. *See* also the Biblical Commission statement of 1993 (*Origins*, January 6, 1994).

2. A historical note: It was not until the second half of this century that Catholic biblical scholars in the United States turned seriously to historical criticism and eventually succeeded in equaling the achievements of their peers. And this despite bitter opposition in certain quarters, involving charges of treason to the faith.

3. Luke Johnson recognizes that "the literal sense of the text is the indispensable instrument of discernment and decision making in the community of faith, and historical criticism continues to play an indispensable role in maintaining the 'otherness' of the text that protects it from manipulation." But sometimes, however "responsible" it be, the conclusion scares church authorities, who simply disregard it.

4. Catholic biblical scholars also participate in what the 1993 Biblical Com-

*(Continued on page 29)*

**Correction** ■ In the list of Commonweal Associates that appeared in the February 13 issue, we regret that Joan C. Silva's name was misspelled.



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*Commonweal*, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly except Christmas/New Year's; and monthly July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY, 10115. Telephone: (212) 662-4200. E-mail: commonweal@msn.com. Web: http://www.commonwealmagazine.org. Fax: (212) 662-4183. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Ruth E. Taylor, 11 Graffam Rd., So. Portland, ME 04106 (207) 799-4387, classified advertising correspondence to 475 Riverside Dr. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Commonweal, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 405, New York, NY 10115.

*Commonweal* is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest, and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, OH 44691. *Commonweal* articles also are available at many libraries and research facilities on CD-ROM and in electronic data bases. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional offices. Copyright © 1998 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2.25. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $44; Canada, $47; foreign, $50. Special two-year rate: U.S. $75; Canada, $81; foreign, $87. Annual rates for air-mail delivery outside U.S.: Western Hemisphere, $84; Europe, $89; other parts of the world, $99. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

*Illustrations:* Cover, Antonucci; pp. 3, 7, 8, 12, 24, 26, Ross, Rothco; pp. 3, 21, Mario Tursi; p. 6, Kemchs, Rothco; pp. 9, 18, Baloo, Rothco; p. 10, Valerry; p. 15, Charlot; p. 22, Punch, Rothco; columnist portraits, Elaine Mills.

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# Free riders

Most of us would rather not think our way through the many-sided political and ethical quandary this country now confronts in Iraq. Its elements include, in one subset, large quantities of horrifying weapons under the control of a ruthless and defiant dictator who has held his civilian population hostage to international sanctions. Other components include a divided West, a United States largely alone (of all things) in backing the United Nations, and the unavoidable need for heavy doses of secrecy, ambiguity, and downright bluff in the desperate search for a diplomatic solution.

The task is made doubly hard by the free rider problem. Free riders are people who get the benefit of communal resources without having to pay—the company just beyond the city limits that benefits from the transportation system and schools it doesn't pay taxes to support, or the woman who sneaks on the bus without paying her fare. When free riders outnumber taxpayers or paying customers, any human enterprise is in danger of collapsing. Something like that seems to be confronting U.S. policy on Iraq.

There are, first, the political free riders: most of Iraq's neighbors who would be happy to be rid of the threat of Iraq's military regime, but who are unwilling to force the issue of the UN weapons inspections. Then there are nations like France and Russia, who look forward to a lucrative Iraqi trade, with or without biological and chemical weapons, with or without Saddam Hussein. Certainly all would be content to see the Iraqi problem disappear, but none want to bear the cost—especially politically. If the United States is ready and willing, what does any other nation have to lose? If we succeed, everyone benefits; if we fail, we alone are responsible for the consequences.

Then, second, there are the moral free riders who would lighten the burdens of conscience by avoiding responsibility for consequences that they leave to the future to repair. There are those who, following Saddam Hussein's deliberate humiliation of the UN arms inspectors, reflexively advocated bombing Iraq without explaining exactly what would be bombed and with what consequences. If attempting to wipe out Iraq's hidden arsenals or weapons-building programs could be justified, what of civilian casualties and damage to an already fragile infrastructure? To succeed, wouldn't air strikes have to be not only massive but repeated, conveying a counterproductive message of either futility or coldbloodedness? Even worse, what of the danger of success—the release of the very chemical and biological agents that the UN inspection teams are hoping to contain? Then there are those who advocate a land invasion and the ousting of Hussein, but without spelling out the future uncertainties or long-range commitments that such an action would produce. Thankfully, most of these proposals have come under increasing scrutiny in recent weeks, and there should be no reader of the nation's op-ed pages who still believes that solutions of this sort are either militarily or morally risk-free.

Moral free riding is not limited to one side of this debate, however. In 1991, there were many voices insisting that Saddam Hussein could be morally contained by economic sanctions rather than war. Yet the sanctions imposed in the wake of



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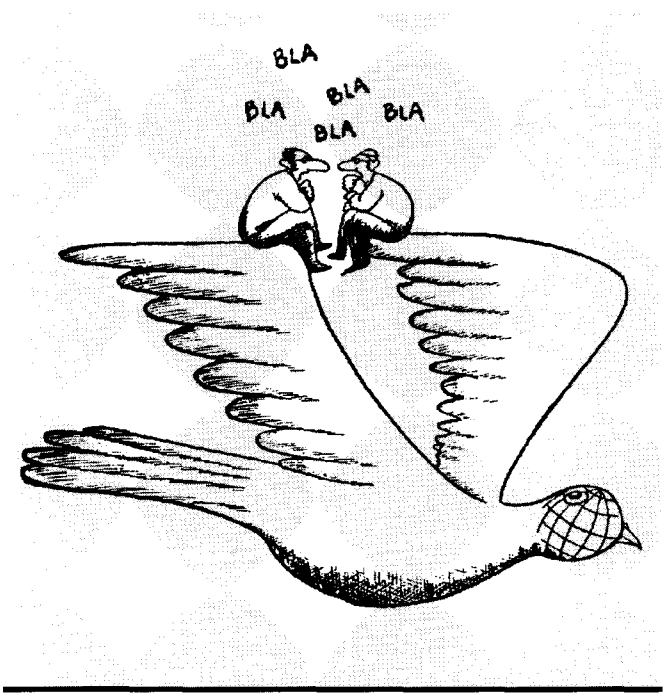
Iraq's defeat turned out to be "war by other means," as Kenneth R. Himes argued in an article (*Commonweal*, February 28, 1997) proposing criteria for taking their moral measure. When Saddam Hussein managed to turn the sanctions against the poor and the powerless rather than his military machine, it was understandable that some people would call for abandoning the sanctions. What is less understandable is that those protesters never reconsidered a military approach for which sanctions were a substitute. But neither would they candidly acknowledge that such a turn in policy is tantamount to abandoning the objective of containing Hussein and his weapons programs (which turned out, according to UN inspectors, to be more lethal than was suspected at the time of the Gulf War).

The problem has not gone away. Do those who object morally to any military action against Hussein's regime openly admit that they are kissing good-by to the future of United Nations peacemaking or arms-inspection efforts, which he has rendered a perfect joke? Do they remember how irrelevant the League of Nations became after Germany and Japan successfully defied it in the 1930s? Do they explain why the world should not anticipate, at the very least, a regional arms race with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel—and maybe Turkey, Egypt, Syria, and Libya—preparing themselves with counter-arsenals of biological, chemical, and nuclear weaponry? Can they imagine that the conditions of the Iraqi people may actually get worse if Saddam is freed both of economic sanctions and the threat of armed response? Do they consider what the implications of this will be, in five to ten years, for peace, for America's understanding of its international role? Is it possible that, having failed to take a stand against Iraqi intransigence, the world will find itself facing not only a rearmed Iraqi military, but a plethora of thugs happy to call the bluff of all free riders?




## Continuing the Conversation

**What to do about the Middle East?** *We tried to answer that question in our December 5, 1997 editorial; and we try again this issue (page 5). There were several letters dissenting from our December editorial, among them was one from Arthur T. Downey. In fact, he sent a whole new agenda for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. We aren't sure how his plans could be carried out given the current crisis; still, they point to a framework larger than the narrow one that now shapes U.S. policy. Here is an edited version of Mr. Downey's proposal.*

Recurring confrontations with Saddam Hussein have brought us again to the brink of hostilities. We tend to see the Iraq situation in simple terms, and in isolation from its regional context. It is as if we are sitting at the table with Iraq, and ignoring the two other elephants sitting there, namely Iran and Israel. The three are so tightly linked that it is unwise to consider our Iraq policy without taking the other two countries into account. I believe that the U.S. position with respect to all three needs to change.

**Iraq** Here are three ways in which we should change our approach.

- We should depersonalize our focus on Saddam because that simplifies and distorts a very complex situation. There is considerable uncertainty about the policies of a potential successor and so Saddam's departure may not end Iraq's totalitarian regime.
- We should continue to ease the economic sanctions that have caused hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties. They are seen, not only in the Arab world, as causing human suffering that would be deemed totally unacceptable if they were imposed on people in America or Europe. There is simply no moral basis for these economic sanctions as they have been applied. The recent "humanitarian" exception from the ban on oil sales should be dramatically expanded: substantial Iraqi oil sales should be permitted under UN auspices with airtight controls to assure that the funds go to alleviate hunger and disease and not to build Saddam's military. Such narrowly targeted economic sanctions with little "collateral damage" to the civilian population would have a sustainable and solid moral basis.
- In other respects, we should get tougher on the Iraqi regime. First, we should call for an international war crimes tribunal to charge Saddam and his leadership with crimes arising from the invasion of Kuwait. Second, while continuing to hunt for weapons of mass destruction, we should insist on substantial cuts in Iraq's huge military force. Instead of 2,000 tanks, for example, Iraq should have 500; similar reductions should be required in aircraft, artillery, and other verifiable military hardware. This would not only make Iraq's neighbors (especially Iran and Kuwait) more secure, it might induce the Iraqi military to force a change at the top.

**Iran** Except perhaps for Cuba, no other nation represents such a hot button for Americans. The 1979 Embassy hostage disaster remains a vivid memory. But in 1995 mutual hos-



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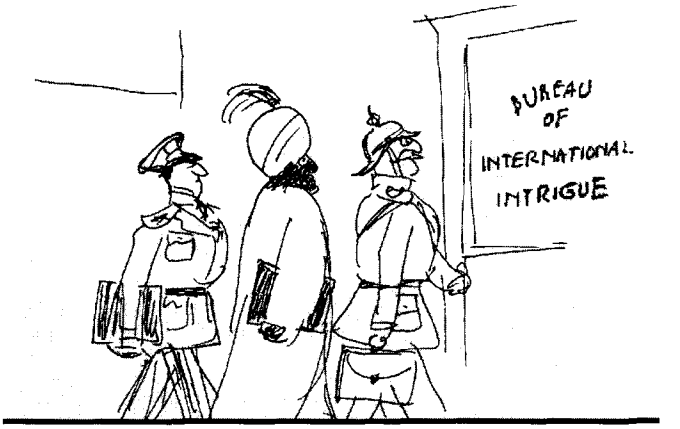
tility was kicked into a higher orbit when the United States imposed a total economic embargo on Iran, and the following year legislated a secondary boycott against countries that disagreed with our policy. This jingoism distracted our attention from Iraq and produced one-sided information about Iran. For example, few Americans know that last year Iran ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention—this is a major step toward assuring that Iran will not develop chemical weapons of mass destruction, despite the fact that Iraq used chemical weapons against Iran.

Iran is the central state in a vast and vital region encompassing both the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea as well as the newly independent nations of Central Asia. Whether or not sharp hostility persists between the United States and Iran, Iran will continue to hold that central role. An end to the U.S.-Iran hostility makes great sense on its own, including the resulting improvement in the security of Israel. A move toward normalization would scare the daylights out of Iraq, which genuinely fears Iran. Here are three suggested changes in our Iran policy.

- We should take up President Khatami's suggestion and encourage as much interchange with Iran—media, scholars, commerce, and diplomatic—as Iran will allow. That probably will not be much, because its distrust of the United States reaches back to the CIA's 1953 overthrow of the Mossadegh government. We need direct and accurate information about Iran, and we must deal with our side of the mutual demonology that has characterized U.S.-Iran relations for so long.
- A key step in the long normalization process would be to drop our trade embargo as well as the secondary embargo against countries that invest in Iran's petroleum sector. They have not been effective. Dropping them would be in the U.S. national interest.
- Rather than trying to retard Iran's future economic development, we should be working harder to prevent its acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. We must deal more effectively with the irresponsible actions of potential suppliers, such as China and Russia. If Iraq's conventional military threat to Iran were dramatically reduced as I proposed above, and if U.S. hostility abated, Iran's perceived need to build up its own military might also decline.

**Israel** Of all of America's "special" relationships, none is more special than that with Israel. However, it has gotten far out of balance, has become unhealthy for both countries, and has had a corrosive effect on a wide range of U.S. foreign policy interests. Arab countries and our European allies will never believe that the United States acts even-handedly when it comes to Israel in relation to others in the region (for example, we look the other way when Israel ignores UN resolutions, acquires an arsenal of nuclear weapons, and forces out long-time Palestinian residents of Jerusalem). It is a fact that America's ties to Israel are too deep to produce anything but a positive bias toward Israel. There is nothing wrong with that.

But, the time has come to take modest steps toward making that relationship more rational and healthy while retaining its special character. A more balanced approach stands on its own merits but it would have the ancillary benefit of advancing our national interests, including in the Iraq and Iran situations. Here are three suggestions for change:




- The United States should renew in some dramatic fashion its basic commitment to the fundamental security of Israel—but only within its original borders, not Arab lands under Israeli military occupation.
- The U.S. should become relatively less attentive to the "peace process" to which we have given disproportionate attention. We also should be less responsive to Israel's desires with respect to Iran, aside from ensuring that Iran knows that the United States will not tolerate genuine threats to Israel's security, specifically including any Iranian role in Hezbollah's activity in southern Lebanon.
- Ideally, U.S. aid to Arab refugee camps, impoverished countries in Africa and South Asia, and elsewhere, should be moved upwards to the approximate per capita level of our annual aid to Israel ($500). Admittedly, that "equality upwards" approach is unrealistic, since it would break the bank—or cause collective heart failure in Congress. We should, however, reduce the flow of taxpayers' money to Israel and redeploy the funds to genuinely needy countries. This has its own merits and moral basis, but it would have the additional benefit of gaining respect for the United States in the Arab world and beyond.

We should step back from our episodic attention to the crisis *du jour* in the Middle East—Saddam's latest move in Iraq, Iran's role in Islamic fundamentalism, or the latest volley of mutual charges in the "peace process"—and look at the key U.S. national interests in the region. If we adjust our policies toward Iraq, Iran, and Israel, U.S. interests in the region as a whole will be strengthened. In addition, some of the rebalancing steps suggested above will also move American policies from morally questionable ground onto more solid foundations. □

**Arthur T. Downey,** *an attorney, served on the staff of the National Security Council (1969–72), in the State Department (1964–69), and taught international law at Georgetown School of Law (1978–90).*



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SIDNEY CALLAHAN

## GOOD & PLENTY

*What happened to large families?*

Why did you want so many children, Mom?" asks my grown-up daughter, herself now a mother of a two-year-old. She knows that in letters written before my wedding in 1955, I expressed my desire for six children, perhaps all girls. Having five boys (surprise) and one girl within ten years (1955–65) was an arduous fulfillment of my dream, but today it's the aspiration itself that seems incredible to my children.

"Well, which of you do you wish weren't here?" I reply. This feeble thrust hits home, since on most days the children all get along with each other and us, and always adore being part of a large loving family. But if I point out to them that you cannot have large families or enjoy adult children unless you first produce babies, I get no response.

Intergenerational differences like these over reproduction force me to reflection. Why have childbearing patterns changed so much since the 1950s? I am also prodded to the inquiry by a paper assignment on the nature of responsible parenthood in a time of genetic progress. Is it the ominous growth of genetic knowledge and the newly salient risks of fetal impairment that increase anxiety about having children? Or is it a general instability in the economic and cultural forces in society?

For Catholics, another cause of the move to smaller families are changes in the church since Vatican II. The widespread acceptance of birth control makes a difference in the means of limiting family size, but why has the desire for large families diminished? Is it hard times in a new guise?

Small families were certainly the norm during the Depression era. My husband and I were 1930s' babies and each of us was the elder in a two-child, middle-class family. Growing up in my family's Southern WASP circle, I don't think I ever knew anyone who had more than three children. Two was the median, the mode, and the mean, even though back in Alabama my mother had been one of nine children and her mother one of eighteen born to a primitive Baptist minister. The national trend of fertility was generally downward until my cohort of women came along and gladly rushed into marriage and babybooming. Were we nostalgic for the past or hyper-hopeful about the future?

Economic boom times in the 1950s certainly had a lot to do with the high fertility rate. Since there had been few Depression babies there was less competition for desirable academic places or for good jobs. It never crossed my mind that getting good work would ever be a problem; jobs, even in academia, were plentiful and offered security. You might skimp and slave to get through school, often with the help of the GI Bill for husbands, but then the world was your oyster. Why not have many children?

Then, too, unlike today, most married women would not have to work in order to make ends meet, or to have basic security. Before divorce became rampant, women weren't afraid of being abandoned and dumped onto the job market with no skills. As a child, I never knew a married woman who worked professionally—or even wanted to.

Those odd young '50s' women like myself who aspired to intellectual careers as well as family life felt confident that we would be able to work out a transition down the road when the children were older and our husbands were established. I remember once when my husband avowed he would like to have twelve children; I assured him that I could only manage six because I intended to have a career.

Indeed a general domestic confidence prevailed—until the tumultuous and disillusioning 1960s and '70s hit American culture. Before these rude awakenings, middle-class families expected to be able to protect their children and raise them well. This assurance and the delight of loving one's children fed the desire to have more, and still more.

O.K. So maybe some of this childbearing was narcissistic pride in one's

*"That kid was born with talent."*



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own progeny, but there was also a great deal of altruism involved. I try to explain to young people that before the world changed, the main channel for youthful desires to serve others was domestic. A big family was like the Peace Corps, only at home. It was like a commune, only you produced all the members. And in my case, I must admit that as a lazy feminine bookworm with little money, having many children was like an Outward Bound Survival challenge.

Don't most young people want to live fully, passionately, and throw themselves into daring projects? It must be human nature because I can remember as a child forcing my poor sister to go without covers in winter so we could shiver and pretend to be Eskimos struggling to survive in the freezing Arctic. (And I'd never heard of Saint Teresa setting out at age ten to convert the Moors.)

Now in a more pessimistic time I can cast a colder eye and see that enthusiastic parental risk-taking can be irresponsible. Psychological and economic standards of childrearing have risen in the last forty years. It's not just increased selfishness. But young Catholics aren't any longer imbued with the fervent belief that God will provide and come to one's succor. The operative spirituality of our day was much taken with Franciscan and Catholic Worker espousals of poverty and providence—which works out better for celibates.

Today the church teaches a more demanding version of Christian parenthood in which parents must take responsibility for providing high levels of education and formation. And increasingly, families are hardpressed for time, energy, money, and communal support. Working parents suffer incredible stresses and conflicts. Two children seem harder to raise than six used to be.

I can only conclude that family size among Americans, Catholics included, will remain small in the foreseeable future. Ironically, our generation was the exception, providing an unusual bulge in the demographic curve. Ah well, another blessing to be grateful for; we were free to be extravagantly fruitful in a time when life was grace and favor, and good and plenty. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

**E.J. DIONNE, Jr.**

## KARLA TUCKER'S LEGACY

*The death penalty debate takes a turn*

Before Karla Faye Tucker's execution fades from our memories, it's worth pondering the legacy she left behind. After committing a brutal act, she repented and softened the hearts of tens of millions of Americans. She forced them to look afresh at what they really think of the death penalty.

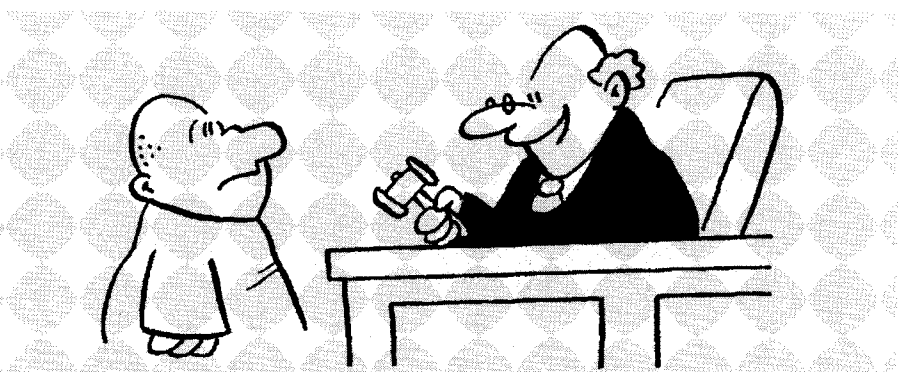
The Tucker execution, I suspect, will be a turning point in our country's long and difficult debate over whether capital punishment is right. It is presumed that because support for the death penalty is now so overwhelming in the United States, it has always been thus. But that is not true. At other times in our history, most recently three decades ago, we looked far more skeptically upon this ultimate punishment.

We worried then about many of the things that Karla Faye Tucker forced us to think about now: whether executing someone is the best way to declare our mutual commitment to the principle that taking another's life is wrong; whether people who do truly terrible things are, from that moment on, pariahs who have no contributions to make to the rest of us; and, most basically, whether we're comfortable in our souls with the collective responsibility we assume when the state puts someone to death.

Foes of capital punishment often find themselves defending people who not only did awful things, but seem to have no remorse for having done them. They are hard-pressed to answer the families of murder victims shouting for just vengeance. The best case for the death penalty is that it is the only just sentence for a human being who takes the life of another. I am opposed to capital punishment but know that I would want the person who killed a loved one to die. It would not seem fair that such a person would long outlive his or her victim.

But Tucker reminded us of all the irrationalities of the death penalty—how it is unevenly applied, how it answers one form of brutality with another and becomes a spectacle.

The power of the Tucker case came from the challenge her execution posed to Christian conservatives who support the death penalty in principle. Many of them came to believe that she, a born-again Christian who appeared truly to have repented of her double murder with a pickax, deserved clemency. The Reverends Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell rose to her defense and the language they used echoed arguments long made, ineffectually, by opponents of the



*"The sentence is death, but you have your choice of gas or electric."*



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death penalty. "Mercy," declared Roberton, "trumps justice."

Ron Carlson, the brother of one of Tucker's victims, voiced the core argument against capital punishment. "The reason I think that Karla should live is that I don't think that we, as human beings, have the right to take a life, whether it is for justice or whether it is in vengeance or revenge," he said. "We, human beings, did not create life. God creates this life. Therefore, I believe that only God should take the life."

Carlson reminded us that those who oppose the death penalty are not indifferent to justice or soft on crime or uncaring about victims. They simply believe that the taking of the life of a guilty person does not make up for the taking of innocent life. They know that to be truly "fair," the death penalty would have to involve the execution of thousands every year. They shrink from that prospect.

In 1966, opposition to the death penalty hit its peak. According to the Gallup Poll, 47 percent of Americans opposed the death penalty then and only 42 favored it. Doubts about the death penalty led to a decline in executions—in 1966, there was but one and in 1967 just two.

Support for the death penalty began rising in the face of the violent crime wave that started in the mid-'60s. The popular sense, not at all foolish, was that the criminal justice system was failing, neither punishing enough criminals nor delivering much justice. Advocating the death penalty was a loud and forceful way of saying: Enough.

But with crime rates abating and with tough laws on the books to jail the guilty, it may be possible for us to re-examine whether our support for the death penalty is genuinely rooted in a concern for justice or whether it in fact violates our sense of both fairness and mercy. Karla Faye Tucker, despite her vicious crime, may help us to do that. The Reverends Robertson and Falwell bore witness to our doubts. □

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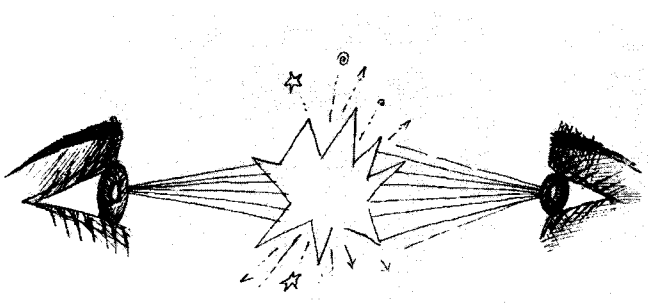
*Joseph D. Policano*

# PUERTO RICO

## Will it be the fifty-first state?

Voters in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico have twice refused to become what many of the island's Caribbean neighbors and most of the underdeveloped world can only dream of becoming: the fifty-first state of the Union. A bill authorizing a third plebiscite is to be presented before the U.S. Congress this session and has ostensible support from both the Republican and Democratic leadership, and from the president. (Behind the scenes, some members of the Republican leadership are reported to be gagging on the idea. Statehood might mean two more Democratic senators and six additional Democrats in the House.) The bill is timed to coincide with this year's one-hundredth anniversary of the island's annexation by the United States. It would give Puerto Rico's 3.5 million residents the chance to decide whether their homeland will become a state, an independent country, or retain its current status.

Officially a commonwealth but actually a colony, Puerto Rico presently chooses its local officials and decides its own budget and taxes. Like one of the states, it has no power to legislate foreign policy, defense matters, or international trade issues. But unless residents emigrate to the mainland United States—which, as U.S. citizens, they can do without obstruction—Puerto Ricans cannot vote for president or Congress, and their only representation in Washington is a single, nonvoting but popularly elected member called a resident commissioner.



If there is a third referendum, which way is it likely to go? Not for independence. Though the independence movement gets a fair amount of press, *independistas* gained barely 5 percent of the vote in the last two referenda, and would fare even worse next time out. That is because, thanks to post-World War II American aid and tax incentives, Puerto Rico is now the richest land in the Caribbean and one of the most well-off in all of Latin America. Real per capita income ($6,360 in 1992) is three to four times that of Caribbean neighbors like Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, and incalculably more than that of Cuba or Haiti. Still, Puerto Rico trails all fifty states in economic development. The *San Juan Star* reported that the commonwealth received $10 billion from Washington in 1996, more than sixteen states, but that, based on population, island residents were still shortchanged in comparison. Statehood advocates argue that if Puerto Rico becomes part of the Union, it will be the twenty-sixth largest state, and that an economic and political bonanza will follow.

Still, if the past holds true, should Puerto Ricans step into the voting booth, powerful and unpredictable emotions can take over. Islanders have a deep pride in their distinct heritage. Furthermore, in past referenda the island's business community has been lukewarm toward statehood, fearful of being placed under Washington's IRS regulations rather than the island's more familiar Treasury Department procedures. These business leaders have the means to wage a strong media campaign to maintain the status quo. Puerto Ricans, like many other Hispanics, are basically conserva-



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tive; they tend to look with suspicion on something new like statehood. Thus, supporters of the present commonwealth status argue that the choice would mean the loss of the island's Spanish heritage. Though some islanders disparage that heritage—as nearly four hundred years of slavery, exploitation, and poverty—it nonetheless has a strong pull on educated islanders who identify with the language but not the history of imperial Spain. Still, Puerto Ricans who want to keep their language could do that, even with statehood.

Those against statehood also argue that the island is not ready for the rigors the transition would impose. They cite the following problems: Less than 3 percent of the island's students speak English fluently, and they do so only because they have lived on the mainland; the school system itself is on the brink of disaster; unemployment is at 10.5 percent (which is historically low); next to D.C. and New York City, AIDS is the highest per capita in the United States; the number of murders on the island rivals that of New York City, which has twice the population; the island's strong labor unions will deter new business ventures, and U.S. labor laws will raise the price of doing business, discouraging new investment; the thousand miles of ocean between the island and the mainland contributes to the cost of everything made and sold on the island.

Still, the arguments for statehood and its benefits seem convincing: Statehood would mean a precisely defined relationship with the United States and the rest of the world; greater access to capital (Puerto Rican companies now depend on expensive bank loans rather than on corporate bonds); a plethora of additional economic assistance from Washington; and significant political representation in Congress that would help to transform the island's colonial status to one of full citizenship. □

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**Joseph D. Policano**'s *most recent article for* Commonweal *was a report from Germany (February 13, 1998).*


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*Beverly Smith*

# 'JUSTA' HOMEMAKER

## One Canadian's fight for recognition

My kids tell me that I may not have been a rebellious teen-ager but now I'm making up for it. My husband tells me I'm a more ardent feminist than most of the women he works with—a comment I'm not sure is meant as praise. The truth as I see it is that I'm driven to follow through on what I believe, and that one particular feminist belief has led me to lobby Canadian government officials, write letters to editors, appear on talk shows, and research three books. Whatever it takes.

My problem is that I'm a homemaker. In my country that ranks me slightly above garden soil in the social hierarchy. One woman in my position took to signing her first name as "Justa," as in "Justa Housewife." I earned honors in school and university and I've taught school to (literally) thousands of kids; darn it, I'm used to a little respect. So it was a shock when a store clerk told me she couldn't accept my check because I didn't have a job, and again when my credit card was refused because I didn't have a note from my husband. I seethed when I learned I could not get life insurance and was not permitted to contribute to our national pension plan. All because I'm Justa.

But these slights are not the bottom line. As my mother says, the one issue that can fire up even the meekest of women is a threat to her child, and so I guess it's at least partly maternal drive that is fueling me. Why shouldn't I be allowed to define mothering and homemaking as my job, my career, and still be treated as a grown-up?

I am a feminist by conviction. When I publish something I often use my initials, "B.G.," instead of my name, "Beverly," so that people will judge my work, gender excluded. I seem to have imbued my kids with my convictions; one of them had already won several feminist awards at age twenty-one. I applaud as loudly as anyone when the specialist heart surgeon is a woman or when a woman is appointed a judge. A woman's place is not in the home, it's wherever she wants to be. But in my country (and elsewhere) her preference is not honored, or rewarded, if she chooses to be in the home.

It's partly a matter of culture and tradition. If a man says



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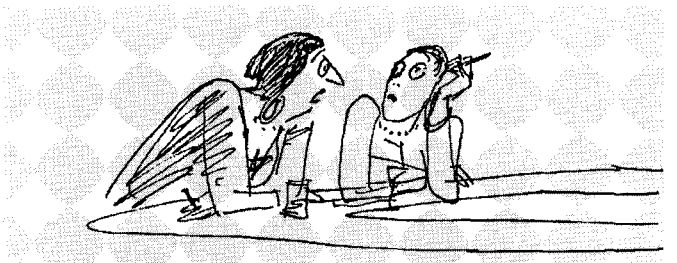

*"I coulda been a contender for 'woman of the year.'"*

he's had a hard day at the office, people sympathize. If a woman says the children have given her a hard day at home, she's a whiner. If a nurse says she isn't paid enough we look at her salary and credentials and try to figure out what would be a fairer wage. If a mother at home says that having no personal income is difficult, society suggests she go out and get a job.

Out of culture flows policy. In Canada and many other lands the entry of most mothers into the paid workforce is a fact of life, and day-care facilities have sprung up everywhere to meet the need. Canada subsidizes the daycare expenses up to $6,000 per child per year till the child is fourteen—this to "offset the cost of working." That's a cultural and political change. But there is no matching help to moms who raise their kids at home.

The premise seems to be that since we are not "working," we have no costs to offset: our children eat for free, play with free toys, get clothes and housing at no cost. It's true, the mom-with-a-job is (probably) contributing to the gross domestic product, and she's helping create jobs by paying for child care. But (a) she is getting paid for her work, and (b) what the mom-in-the-home does also has societal value. She provides goods and services that enable both the paid workforce and the next generation to function.

I don't begrudge women with paying jobs the help of the state to rear their children; basically it's the children who need the help and who benefit, and all children are equal. But I want in. My children are also equal. In current Canadian law anyone who has a blood relationship to a child cannot be granted money for caring for the child, even though most surveys show that a blood relationship is a fairly good predictor that such a caretaker will love and stand by the child. Caregiving by mom or dad or grandma doesn't have to be better than day care to make my point, it need only be recognized as comparably safe and competent. People deserve options, as many a "working mother" would agree.

I've been making these points in letters to officials for some twenty years, and in that period things have actually gotten worse. (Maybe I'm a curse.) We have lost monetary value on the tax form as dependents of spouses: Whereas in 1957 a married man could deduct one-third of his income in support of a spouse at home, the deduction now allowed is less than one-seventh of a median income. The expenses of child-rearing were once recognized in tax law, but today parents can no longer deduct children as dependents, and the family allowance we once received has in many cases disappeared.

Who supports this cause? On my street there are two moms at home with children, four moms who work full- or part-time outside the home, and two who do salaried work from their homes. Some use nannies, some use sitters, some depend on day care. We cheer one another on because as neighbors we see when one of us is getting overstressed (and we all are from time to time). We babysit for each other and bake for each other. Friends, and as such mutually supportive.

Not so those who speak for women. The major women's groups in my country (and, it seems, in the United States), do not agree on whether to value homemakers. Some have written me saying the choice of being a homemaker is naïve; better if women all have independent incomes, in part to brace themselves for divorce or widowhood. Full-time mothers are often excluded from official meetings about child-care (they're only for operators of day-care centers), and generally aren't invited to meetings about women's issues, attended only by women working outside the home. My government officially funds only the women's groups that ignore the needs and rights of homemakers.

I am not arguing that I am a better mother than others, or that raising kids at home is better than day care. Not at all. It's true that women were once more or less chained to the sink, and that was bad. Today—unless we can freely choose where we want to be—we are chained to the office desk. Speaking strictly as a feminist, I think that belittling women's work in the home was and is wrong. Allowing women to enter the professions was right, but it moved only halfway. To say women now have value because they can do what was men's work still says that only what was men's work has value. Women's work has value wherever it happens; if it is in the home in a very traditional role, it is as good as any other role. Women have to be seen not only as equals of men but as equals of one another.

If this way of thinking makes me a radical, so be it. My formal complaint to the United Nations accusing my government of official discrimination against homemakers has been accepted and will be heard by the UN's Division for the Advancement of Women, an arm of the Commission on the Status of Women, when this body meets in New York March 2-13. Two Canadian women's groups, Kids First and Mothers Are Women, have officially backed my complaint, and Endeavor Forum in Australia will support it with a matching one against their own government. I have received encouragement as well from Parents Rights in the United States, *Unione Intercontinentale Caslinghe* in Rome, Great Britain's National Assembly of Women, and the World Movement of Mothers in Paris. There's irony here, in that what was traditional, a societal norm, is now seen as aberrant. But that's okay. I'm up for it. □

**Beverly Smith** *is a free-lance writer, a former teacher of French in grades seven through nine, and the mother of four children, ages seventeen through twenty-three. She lives in Calgary, Alberta.*



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# WILL EVERYTHING REALLY BE OK?

## *The spirituality of Julian of Norwich*

**Frederick C. Bauerschmidt**

Julian of Norwich is an unlikely prophet for our times. This fourteenth-century Englishwoman, whose given name is now lost to us, received a series of sixteen revelations in May 1370. After this, she became a recluse and lived the last part of her life in a small dwelling built on the side of Saint Julian's Church in Norwich (from which she took her name). Her account of her visions is available in numerous modern translations (usually titled either *Showings* or *A Revelation of Love*), and has become something of a bestseller-come-lately.

Certain of Julian's characteristic themes—her understanding of Christ as mother, her constant reaffirmation that "all shall be well," her understanding of sin as a kind of sickness that afflicts us—seem a natural fit for modern therapeutic spirituality. But the therapy Julian offers is a radical one that challenges conventional therapeutic pieties of holiness as wholeness and salvation as self-actualization.

Julian's claim that "all shall be well" clearly has a ready appeal for an age of anxiety like our own. And her notion of Christ as mother would seem to speak not only to feminist understandings of God but more broadly of a God who seeks our welfare. God makes all things well because God has a tender, feminine side. Beyond this, we discover in Julian a notion with great cultural resonance: sin understood not as a matter of deliberate fault, but as a sickness. What we are in need of is not so much forgiveness but healing. In particular, we need to be healed of the idea that God is angry with us, and that we need somehow to *obtain* his forgiveness. Julian recognizes that this understanding of sin is at odds with the teachings of the church as she had learned them, but she stubbornly refuses to abandon it.

Viewed in this way, Julian seems to be a prophetic model of our culture's own approach to spirituality. The God who promises that "all shall be well" is seen as an avuncular figure who exists to supply our spiritual needs, a God who would never condemn someone to eternal punishment. Jesus our Mother is both an archetype of the Great Mother (thus valorizing women's spirituality) and an icon of nonjudgmental, unconditional acceptance. Sin, from God's perspective, is no big deal; from our perspective it is a big deal, but only inasmuch as we have not yet learned the art of self-forgiveness. Finally, religious institutions, while valuable as sources of symbol and ritual, tend to be retrograde and overly concerned with sin, perhaps as a ploy to gain power. Read in this way, Julian appears a perfect saint for our times which aspire to be therapeutic, anti-institutional, and postpatriarchal.

This perspective on Julian may account for some of her current popularity. But I would argue that that is not what attracts many modern people to Julian's writings. For Julian's Christ is not without his cross. Her visions, for the most part, are closely associated with a physical crucifix that stands before her face. She sees the crucified body bleed copious amounts of blood, sees his face discolored by death, the skin of his corpse "small-rimpled [i.e., shriveled] with a tanned color, like a dry board." In short, Julian sees Jesus transformed from a person into a lifeless thing. And seeing this, she is filled with pain.

The Jesus of Julian's revelation is not the Jesus of feel-good religiosity. It is Jesus the Lord of creation brought low to share in the suffering of creatures. The promise that "all shall be well" is not a promise that God is planning to relieve us of pain in this life. It is the paradoxical promise that the union of our sufferings with the suffering of Christ will somehow prove redemptive. This "all shall be well" is not a promise of "recovery" but of survival. "He said not: *Thou shalt not be tempested, thou shalt not be...afflicted*; but He said: *Thou shalt not be overcome*." The crucified Jesus thus remains the central icon of Julian's revelation, and even when she receives revelations about the Resurrection or the triune godhead or the bliss of heaven, these never supplant the image of the Cross. Julian's own prayer is inextricably bound to the historical humanity of Jesus. She seeks no love except the love of Jesus, a love that led him—and promises to lead her—to the Cross. Thus, Julian's seemingly comforting message that "all shall be well" turns out to be the disturbing message that we are called to share in the compassion-unto-death of Jesus. And this is good news, since it grows out of the understanding that God views us, and our sinful condition, in the mirror of Jesus and his loving obedience. Our identity, both as individuals and as the human race, are literally "knit" into the saving person of Jesus.

What Julian offers is nothing less than a radical therapy for our damaged selves. Whereas the presumption of modern therapeutic spirituality is that we will "get better," that our goal is "wellness," Julian's presumption is that we will never get "better" until we enter into the bliss of heaven. And yet, paradoxically, everything is already "better." Dorothy Day summarized Julian's teachings by saying "the worst has happened and been repaired," meaning that the true tragedy of the human race is

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not this or that fall of mine but the primal falling of Adam, which has already been restored in Christ. Julian depicts God speaking to us and saying, "For since I have made well the most harm, then it is my will that thou know thereby that I shall make well all that is less." Yet this restoration does not nullify the real pain and sin into which we fall. Julian writes, "we have in us, for the time of this life, a marvelous mingling both of weal and woe: we have in us our Lord Jesus uprisen, [and] we have in us the wretchedness and the mischief of Adam's falling, dying."

Julian's view of this "marvelous mingling of both weal and woe" is a major contribution of her thought. Much recent spirituality has encouraged us, and rightly so, to have a more positive understanding of embodiment. Unlike some of her medieval fellows, Julian shuns the association of embodiment with sinfulness, but she sees clearly what we may well ignore: embodiment entails risk. With regard to pain, great advances in medical technology tend to shield us from the fact that, being bodies, we must suffer. We have now come to the point that if anything goes wrong with our bodies, we anticipate they can and should be repaired. The result is a kind of technologizing of the body, an objectification of it. A gap opens up between "me" and "my body." This gap carries over into our moral lives, such that "I" cannot be identified with the body that indulges its passions. Despite our valorization of the body, we have a deeply ingrained instrumental approach to embodiment. Julian will accept no such gap. The thoroughly embodied self is subject not only to broken legs, gluttony, and cancer, but to roving eyes and death in childbirth.

But, as Julian notes, we still "have in us our Lord Jesus uprisen." Our embodied existence is redeemed through the embodiment of God in Christ. Thus our bodies—ourselves—so subject to pain and temptation and sorely in need of redemption, are nonetheless saved in the rising of Jesus. Even with our bodily weakness, this is the source of hope for us.

It is a commonplace among wise Christian teachers that our life in this world remains one of weal and woe. But Julian is unusual in claiming that it is not simply that we live in an alternation between the two, but that our lives are always *completely* of woe and *completely* of weal. The two exist *simultaneously*. In the midst of suffering and sin, we are intimately united with Jesus who suffers the effects of sin. For Julian this means that one cannot speak of stages of spiritual progress or measure where one stands on the "ladder of perfection." What we can know is that even in the depths of sin and suffering, we are deeply enfolded in the love of God. Not unlike Thérèse of Lisieux, Julian teaches not a way of perfection but what Simon Tugwell has called a "way of imperfection."

This is radical therapy for a therapeutic age. Julian's point is not "every day I'm getting better and better," or that "I'm good enough and smart enough and, doggone it, people like me." Rather she says "it behoveth us verily to see that of ourselves we are right nought but sin and wretchedness." A gloomy truth indeed, but at the same time God, "of His courtesy will not shew it to us but by the light of His grace and mercy." In other words, it is important to see our nothingness so that we can see ourselves *properly* as beings constituted simply by the love of the God who created us from nothing and who has redeemed us from the nothingness of evil. Our human attempts at self-esteem—whether they come in the form of a program for self-improvement or in therapies of self-acceptance—end up as bars to the realization of our true glory as creatures of the God "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom. 4:17).

Julian's therapy consists in what she calls "noughting"—a term that encompasses both suffering and sin, but also the stripping and purification of our desires, desiring nothing but God. Noughting is the path of discipleship, by which we follow Jesus who was "noughted" on the cross: "We shall be noughted following our Master, Jesus, till we be full purged." Yet this noughting is never simply the acceptance of woe. It is also, for those "with eyes to see and ears to hear," the acceptance of weal. For it unites us with God by stripping us of our desires for those things that, while good and beautiful in themselves, we deform by preferring them to God who is their source. Noughting is a therapy for our restless souls. It does not involve hatred of God's creatures, but simply a recognition of their littleness, and of our own, so as to love appropriately.

This therapy is not something that we must go far afield to find. Julian thinks that life itself will strip us if we let it, that our fragile, embodied existence brings with it its own penances. She recounts God telling her that "all thy living is penance-profitable." Our penance is to be found in the dimishments of everyday life: disappointments and failures, minor irritations and major betrayals, sickness, aging, and death. These things happen; they do not need to be sought out. Yet in these woes is also found our weal, in this sickness is found our cure, "and in the remedy He willeth that we rejoice."

As life strips us of all the things to which we have fastened our affections, we can come to see that "the remedy is that our Lord is with us, keeping and leading into the fulness of joy." On the cross, God too is stripped. He sees his offer of fullness of life in the kingdom rejected; God is betrayed by his friends, suffers excruciating pain, and dies. Even in our deepest noughting—*especially* in our deepest noughting—when everything is taken from us, God is still there. And just as God brings creation out of nothingness, so too God transforms nothingness into the fullness of joy.

Rather than seeing in Julian's current popularity another example of the trivialization of the Christian tradition by those who comb the world's religions for agreeable bits of spirituality, I believe Julian attracts because she teaches us things modern culture would have us deny. She teaches that life is painful, but can be borne with grace. She teaches that we will never find rest in the things of this world—whether material goods, goals, friends, or family—but that we can love them and love God through them if we can see them with God's own eyes. Finally, Julian teaches that even if we never achieve "wellness" in this life, still "all shall be well." We are drawn to her because we are drawn to the truth about ourselves, our world, and God. □



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# THE CHURCH & DISSENT

## *How Vatican II ushered in a new way of thinking*

**Richard A. McCormick**

On August 12, 1996, the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin announced what is now known as the Common Ground Initiative. There were many initial responses, both critical and supportive. Bernardin reflected on some of them in his inaugural address for the project (*see*, *Origins*, November 14, 1996). Some of those who objected argued that the Common Ground Initiative would legitimate dissent.

Bernardin's response was interesting. After noting that dissent is a complicated term, he went on to characterize the view that all disagreement or criticism of church teaching is illegitimate is "unqualified...unfounded...a disservice to the church." What Bernardin did reject was "aggressive public campaigns against church teachings that undermine the authority of the magisterium," not any dissent as such. Yet in the contemporary church, the idea of dissent remains terribly divisive. Therefore, it is worth discussing.

I want to raise two questions to shape my argument. First, why has dissent occurred in the church? Second, what does it mean? My reflections will be adapted from earlier writings, especially *The Critical Calling* (Georgetown University Press, 1989).

Why has dissent occurred in the church? There are two remarkably different answers given to this question. The first may be exemplified by James Hitchcock, professor of history at Saint Louis University, in his *The Dissenting Church* (National Committee of Catholic Laymen, 1983): "The truth of the matter is that, at least in the United States, it would be difficult to find a major institution more internally disorganized, more ideologically divided, and less effective in its governing structures than is the Catholic church."

Hitchcock makes references to "present disarray," "the unraveling of the Catholic system of authority," "the subversion of authority," "the spectacle of a great institution apparently coming apart," "all the teachings of the church...in jeopardy," "the gradual erosion of faith." For Hitchcock, dissent challenges the church "not from the margins but through the church's own central organs. Indeed, it is the official institutions of the church which are now used to propagate dissent and, often enough, to repress orthodoxy." Church bureaucrats learn their dissent from academics, especially theologians. It has become "the working orthodoxy of most of the theological profession."

In the face of all this, bishops remain irresponsibly silent or show active sympathy with dissenting opinions. Many extend endless sensitivity to "liberal anguish" while "similar manifestations of anguish from the 'right' are [seen as] mere hysteria." Thus dissent has become organized and entrenched. "Explanations as to why this is allowed to happen could range from simple confusion and timidity on the part of some church leaders, through the mistaken idea that the flames should be allowed to burn themselves out, to undeniable active sympathy with dissenting positions on the part of an increasing number of bishops." The effect of all this is the erosion of faith. In Hitchcock's words:

> Many American Catholics regularly experience, from official sources, direct attacks on their faith. Even those who do not, have now experienced, for nearly two decades, the gradual erosion of that faith, as a rock is eroded by small but relentless drops of falling water. A tone of voice, a passing comment, a strategically situated smirk, a raised eyebrow are means by which those charged with upholding official teaching in fact contrive to undermine it.

And what are the key issues around which dissent (a dissent that erodes *faith*) occurs? Celibacy of the clergy, ordination of women, divorce, and contraception. However, Hitchcock sees in such dissenters people who "instinctively oppose any reaffirmation of teaching authority, in no matter what

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area." Thus eventually "all of the teachings of the church are in jeopardy."

In summary, then, Hitchcock sees dissent as opposed to orthodoxy, as disloyalty and "infidelity," as a denial of authority, as the cause of confusion and an attack on faith, as catering to fads and ecclesiastical careerism, as reflecting timidity in high places, as a cave-in to lobbyists, as inevitably involving the destructive notion of a dual magisterium in the church. One can see all of this, Hitchcock argues, in the Catholic press: *Commonweal, U.S. Catholic, America, Theological Studies* ("the chief organ for advancing dissenting opinion on the scholarly level"). For all practical purposes, there no longer exists "an official Catholic press in the sense of publications which faithfully convey only official positions."

There is another approach to the question "Why has dissent occurred?" Hitchcock wonders whether the phenomenon of dissent occurred *because of* or *in spite of* Vatican II. He opts for the latter. Indeed, he argues that one of the many failures of leadership over the past twenty-five years has been its inability to articulate what the council really said and did. One thing it did not do, according to Hitchcock, is provide the rationale for the kind of dissent he laments.

I disagree and will list twelve factors (more could be enumerated) that I believe encouraged *a new critical awareness* in the church and help explain the emergence of dissent in the postconciliar church.

Unless otherwise noted, the references are to paragraph numbers in the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes).*

**1. Changing times.** The council was keenly aware of the rapidity of change in the modern world. It went so far as to characterize our times as "a new stage of its history."

> Today, the human race is passing through a new stage of its history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world. Triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man, these changes recoil upon him, upon his decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and to people. Hence we can already speak of a true social and cultural transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well (4).

**2. Newness of problems.** Speaking of the harmony between Christian teaching and culture, the council noted the difficulty of this harmony because changing times raise new questions. It stated: "Recent studies and findings of science, history, and philosophy raise new questions which influence life and demand new theological investigations" (62).

**3. The variety of competence in the church.** Once again noting the rapidity of change in the world and the desirability of an exchange between the church and diverse cultures, the council acknowledged that "the church requires special help." That is, "She must rely on those who live in the world, are versed in different institutions and specialties, and grasp their innermost significance in the eyes of both believers and unbelievers" (44). And even more explicitly, the form of that reliance is specified in the following paragraph:

> Let the layman not imagine that his pastors are always such experts, that to every problem which arises, however complicated, they can readily give him a concrete solution, or even that such is their mission. Rather enlightened by Christian wisdom, and giving close attention to the teaching authority of the church, let the layman take on his own distinctive role (43).

I note only that the word "pastors" includes bishops, even the bishop of Rome.

**4. Openness to the sciences.** Speaking of pastoral care, the council fathers insisted that "appropriate use must be made not only of theological principles, but also of the findings of the secular sciences, especially of psychology and sociology. Thus the faithful can be brought to live the faith in a more thorough and mature way" (62). The council then went on to urge the faithful to "live in very close union with the men of their time": "Let them blend modern science and its theories and the understanding of the most recent discoveries with Christian morality and doctrine. Thus their religious practice and morality can keep pace with their scientific knowledge and with an ever-advancing technology" (62).

**5. Freedom of theological inquiry and speech.** At the end of chapter 2 (on the proper development of culture), the council expressed the hope that laypersons would be well formed in the sacred sciences. It continued:

> In order that such persons may fulfill their proper function, let it be recognized that all of the faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence (62).

**6. The church's modesty about its own competence.** Sometimes in the past, the teaching competence of the church was presented in a way that was all-encompassing and triumphalistic. The council fathers noted simply: "The church guards the heritage of God's Word and draws from it religious and moral principles, without always having at hand the solution to particular problems" (33).

**7. The independence of the sciences.** The council insisted on the autonomy of "earthly affairs" in the sense that created things and societies have their own laws and values that must be deciphered and respected. It then applied this explicitly to the sciences: "Consequently, we cannot but deplore certain habits of mind, sometimes found, too, among Christians, which do not sufficiently attend to the rightful independence of science" (36). That little phrase "sometimes found, too, among Christians" is officially annotated with a reference to a two-volume study of the works of Galileo Galilei.

**8. The fact of doctrinal development.** This matter was treated by the council in the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*. There we read:

> This tradition, which comes from the Apostles, develops in the church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down.



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This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers (*see*, Luke 2:19, 51), through the intimate understanding of spiritual things they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth (8).

The constitution then speaks of the constant movement of the church "forward toward the fullness of divine truth." Several things should be noted here. First, movement forward "toward the fullness of divine truth" implies an incomplete possession of such truth at given points in history. Second, if this is true of the "words which have been handed down," it would be *a fortiori* true of the solutions to certain moral problems that have not been "handed down." Third, the first medium of this development is the contemplation and reflection of the faithful. Finally, the *Declaration on Religious Freedom* was the key conciliar example of doctrinal development. As John Courtney Murray stated: "It was, of course, the most controversial document of the whole council, largely because it raised with sharp emphasis the issue that lay continually below the surface of all the conciliar debates—the issue of the development of doctrine....The council formally sanctioned [in this document] the validity of the development itself."

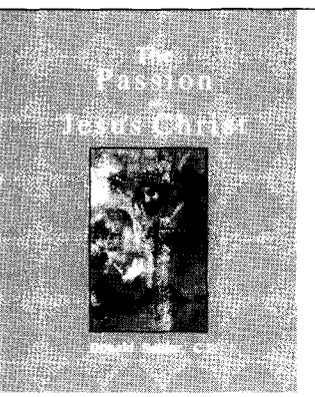
**9. Adaptation of practices.** In its *Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches*, the council modified its sacramental discipline with regard to the churches of the East. Specifically, in permitting access to the sacraments of penance, the Eucharist, and anointing of the sick, Vatican II stated: "In view of special circumstances of time, place, and personage, the Catholic church has often adopted and now adopts a milder policy, offering to all the means of salvation and an example of charity among Christians through participation in the sacraments." (26)

**10. Acknowledgment of legitimate pluralism.** After calling attention to the key role of laypersons in the elaboration of moral doctrine and practice, the council stated: "Often enough the Christian view of things will itself suggest some specific solution in certain circumstances. Yet it happens rather frequently, and legitimately so, that with equal sincerity some of the faithful will disagree with others on a given matter." (43)

**11. Conciliar admission of errors and deficiencies.** As might be expected, this remains largely implicit. But, as Avery Dulles has pointed out (*Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America*, 1976), Vatican II has implicitly admitted church error and injustice by rehabilitating, as it were, and using the insights of theologians previously silenced. As Dulles puts it:

> Most importantly for our purposes, Vatican II quietly reversed the earlier positions of the Roman magisterium on a number of important issues. The obvious examples are well-known. In biblical studies, for instance, the *Constitution on Divine Revelation* accepted a critical approach to the Bible, thus supporting the previous initiatives of Pius XII and delivering the church once and for all from the incubus of the earlier decrees of the Biblical Commission. In the *Decree on Ecumenism*, the council cordially greeted the ecumenical movement and involved the Catholic church in the larger quest for Christian unity, thus putting an end to the hostility enshrined in Pius XII's *Mortalium animos*. In church-state relations, the *Declaration on Religious Freedom* accepted the religiously neutral state, thus reversing the previously approved view that the state should formally propose the truth of Catholicism. In the theology of secular realities, the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* adopted an evolutionary view of history and a modified optimism regarding secular systems of thought, thus terminating more than a century of vehement denunciations of modern civilization. As a result of these and other revisions, the council rehabilitated many theologians who had suffered under severe restrictions with regard to their ability to teach and publish. The names of John Courtney Murray, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Henri de Lubac, and Yves Congar, all under a cloud of suspicion in the 1950s, suddenly became surrounded with a bright halo of enthusiasm. By its actual practice of revision, the council implicitly taught the legitimacy and even the value of dissent. In effect the council said that the ordinary magisterium of the Roman Pontiff had fallen into error and had unjustly harmed the careers of loyal and able scholars.

Moreover, even more explicitly, in its *Decree on Ecumenism*, after noting the need of "continual reformation," the council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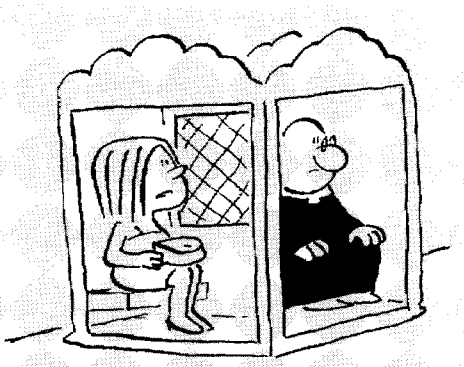

*"Would it be all right if I got a second opinion from another religion?"*

adds: "Therefore, if the influence of events or of the times has led to deficiencies in conduct, in church discipline, or *even in the formulation of doctrine* (which must be carefully distinguished from the deposit itself of faith), these should be appropriately rectified at the proper moment" (6).

In commenting on the words I have italicized, Walter M. Abbot states: "It is remarkable, indeed, for an ecumenical council to admit the possible deficiency of previous doctrinal formulations." Remarkable indeed!

**12. The new task of theology.** It is clear that Christians want to profess and apply their faith in the times and cultures in which they live. This powerfully suggests the need of a new language, new formulations. The council explicitly acknowledged this need in its distinction between the substance and formulation of the faith. This means that theology must move from a mere repetition of past formulas to a search for fresh and more appropriate ones, to much more innovation than was envisaged in the past.

In summation, what we have here is Vatican II underlining the rapidly changing times, the novelty of the problems cast up by these changes, the many competences needed to face them adequately, the independence of the sciences and the openness to them required to face our problems, the freedom of inquiry and expression necessary, the incompleteness of the church's competence, deficiencies in past efforts to grapple with problems, the fact and need of development, the legitimacy of differences of opinion among believers, and the fact of variation in church discipline. If such considerations do not explain—and even foster and validate—the notion of dissent in the church, then I should like to know why not.

It is playing the ostrich to say that dissent emerged in the church in the midsixties *in spite of* the council, not *because of* it. There may have been other factors involved, but anyone who reads the conciliar texts dispassionately will, I think, agree that Vatican II authorized a new critical spirit in the church, a spirit that lifted the notion of dissent from a suspect gloss in theological textbooks into the mainstream of Catholic life and polity. One may, of course, regret this, may squirm under its untidiness; but that is a matter of one's psychological posture and of one's intellectual tolerance for the tentative and the unresolved. It is not a question of what Vatican II did or did not say. *That* I think is clear.

What is the meaning of dissent? In order to understand the meaning of dissent in the church, we must see it in the context of the overall mentality that assesses it. One mentality sees it as a threat to authority and as disobedience. Another accepts it as a normal aspect of human growth in understanding. These two mentalities are vying for dominance in the contemporary church. They are transparent of a notion of church, what it means to be church. How one views dissent will reveal these deeper theological undercurrents.

In what follows I want to present two different scenarios of the magisterium—that is, how the church teaches. These two scenarios are generated by two distinct sets of cultural variables that affect the very notion of both teaching and of church, and therefore of our understanding of "dissent."

The first approach can be called the "preconciliar model." This model predominated from the Council of Trent to Vatican II. Some years ago—with the infallibility that attaches to younger years—I identified the characteristics as the following:

**1. Self-definition of the church.** For centuries, a juridical model prevailed, a pyramidal structure in which truth and authority descended from above, from Rome. In this model, the very term "church" (as in "the church has always taught") referred to a small group with authority in the church.

**2. Mass media.** For centuries the information flow in the church and world was slow, restricted. This meant that opinions were formed without the richness or the contribution of varying traditions. Furthermore, authentic formulations were received less critically than may have been warranted, and retained a formative influence, sometimes disproportionate to their value.

**3. Complexity of issues.** For a long period, Catholic education was defensive. Our seminaries were isolated sanctuaries. In this atmosphere, ecclesial attitudes could take shape without full exposure to contemporary sciences and disciplines, and therefore at times without an awareness of the real complexity of issues.

**4. Exercise of authority.** Authority was highly centralized, consultation was quite limited. For example, Oswald von Nell-Breuning, who composed *Quadragesimo anno*, did so all alone, without consultors or critics; the official version of *Casti connubii* was altered in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* because the Vatican latinist misrepresented the mind of Franciscus Hürth on punitive sterilization; after the definition of papal infallibility it was—and still is—in some circles unthinkable to question papal statements, a development that reached its pinnacle in *Humani generis*, as Yves Congar has noted.

**5. Educational status of lay people and clergy.** For many centuries the clergy were the best educated persons in the church, not least because they had access to higher education. In such a situation, it is understandable that they would assume responsibilities that might be dispersed differently in other eras.

**6. Ecclesial groups existed in an atmosphere of polite warfare.** Protestants, all Protestants, were *adversarii* of our doc-



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trinal and moral theses. Their doctrinal and moral writings were forbidden reading. We did not turn to these as sources of wisdom. Their very separation from the one true church was a presumption against their orthodoxy.

**7. Educational styles.** The "master concept" dominated seminary and university teaching, the "hand-down" notion of teaching where the professor dictated from his notes, which were often yellow with age. This method was rendered viable and possible by a uniformity of philosophy and language in the church.

Now, if we take these variables, shake, and mix them, they generate a notion of teaching in the church with the following characteristics: (1) an undue bifurcation between the teaching and learning functions in the church, with a consequent unique emphasis on the right to teach—and relatively little emphasis on the duty to learn and the sources of learning in the church; (2) an undue identification of the teaching function with a single group in the church, the hierarchy; (3) an undue isolation of a single aspect of teaching, namely, the judgmental: who has the decisive, "final word." Thus, in the field of moral theology it was taken for granted by many that on any given moral problem, however complex, *Roma locuta causa finita*. In this approach the term "magisterium" came to mean the hierarchical issuance of authoritative decrees.

Now let me turn to what I will call a postconciliar scenario. Here, by force of history, the variables have all changed.

**1. The church now defines herself as the People of God, a 'communio.'** The model is concentric. It is the people who are the repository of wisdom. As Cardinal Suenens put it, "the pyramid of the old manuals was reversed."

**2. Where the media are concerned, we live in the age of instant communication.** Canon Louis Janssens writes an obscure probe in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* and it is reported in *Newsweek* a few weeks later. An even more obscure theologian, then from the Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown, writes a rather conservative essay on neonatal intensive care in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and is banned from speaking by the local ordinary in Melbourne a week later. Rapid communication suggests that people are better informed than ever—if not always wiser than ever.

**3. In our day, Catholics are profoundly immersed in the social and intellectual world about them.** They are exposed to many modes of thought. Our seminaries are cheek-by-jowl with the great universities in the country. In sum, we exist in an atmosphere highlighting the genuine complexity of moral and doctrinal issues.

**4. Authority.** Collegiality prevails, and theoretically at all levels—papal, episcopal, parochial. To some extent, the church mimics in her internal life and organization the currents of the secular world in which she lives. It is no accident that collegiality emerged in the church at the very time secular institutions were captivated by democratic pro-


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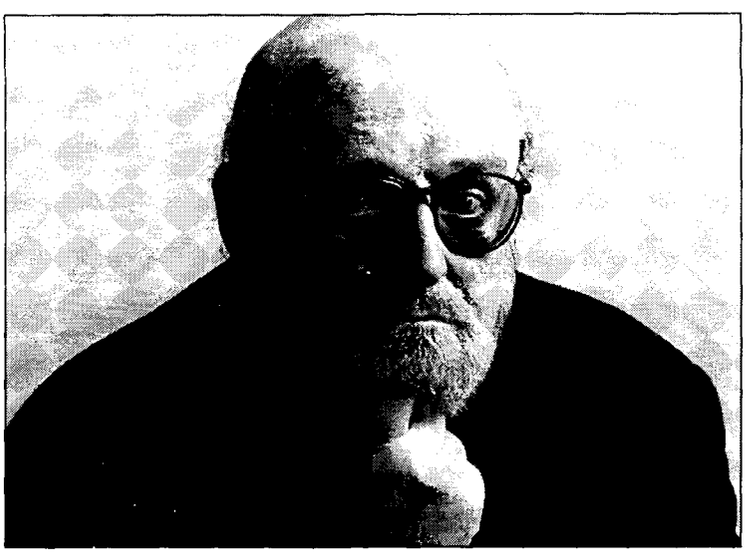

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cesses and shared decision making.

**5. Lay and clergy education.** There is now widespread availability of higher education and intense specialization. Lay persons are often capable of relating their experience and expertise to doctrinal matters, in a most enlightening way. Vatican II recognized this when it urged the layperson to "take on his/her own distinctive role." This urging is a final shaking free of the "dependency syndrome" that previously dominated Catholic moral and pastoral formation and practice.

**6. Ecclesial groups now exist in an ecumenical sunshine.** Those who were *adversarii* are now separated brothers and sisters. Vatican II recognized this when it stated: "In fidelity to conscience, Christians are joined with the rest of men in the search for truth and for the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals and from social relationships."

**7. In education, we now encourage student involvement, experiment, creativity.** We rely on discussion, seminars, cross-disciplinary dialogue. Philosophical uniformity has long disappeared from the scene.

These remarkable and rather massive sea changes have generated—or perhaps more accurately, should generate—a modified notion of teaching in the church, the magisterium. This modified notion would exemplify the following characteristics: (1) the learning process should be seen as essential to the teaching process; (2) teaching is understood as a multidimensional function, of which the judgmental or decisive is only one aspect; and (3) the teaching function involves the charisms of many persons. Within these perspectives, greater attention is given to evidence and analyses in evaluating authentic teaching. Thus only persuasive reasons command assent. The appropriate response to authentic noninfallible teaching is no longer seen as unquestioning acceptance and obedience. Rather, it is a docile personal attempt to assimilate and appropriate the teaching—a process that can end in full acceptance, or, when it is not convincing, in further study and conscientious dissent.

No one has described this process better than Bishop B.C. Butler. "To require," he says, "the same adhesion for doctrines that are indeed taught by officials with authority but to which the church has not irrevocably committed herself is to abuse authority." After referring to the "respect that is due to the considered actions and utterances of those in positions of legitimate and official authority," Butler says this about what is the proper response to authoritative but noninfallible teaching: "The mood of the devout believer will be...a welcoming gratitude that goes along with the keen alertness of a critical mind, and with a good will concerned to play its part both in the purification and the development of the church's understanding of her inheritance...."

When Catholics realize that we must bring "the keen alertness of a critical mind" to official teachings if we are to contribute to them—as we must if we are to be loyal to the truth—then we will simultaneously understand that dissent is a distinct and nonthreatening possibility.

It is within this understanding of both church and magisterium that an assessment of dissent should occur. Concretely, if I dissent, it is the end of a process, a docile attempt to assimilate. The process must be prayerful, arduous, reflective, informed. Otherwise there is no learning. My point is: Responsible dissent is not only a temporary end to a search. It is and must be seen as a new beginning, a beginning of new evidence in the church. Concretely, if large segments of competent and demonstrably loyal Catholics disagree with certain formulations of *Humanae vitae*, this must be seen as the beginning of a new reflection. The very same thing is true of a document like *The Challenge of Peace*. One of the interesting offshoots of that pastoral letter is that more conservative Catholics—who strongly rejected elements of it—learned that dissent does not necessarily involve disloyalty or disrespect. Otherwise, we have ruled out personal reflection in the learning process of the church—and that is intolerable.

In this perspective, the magisterial function in the church is much more a matter of a teaching-learning *process*. In such a process, dissent should play a positive, nonthreatening role. It is part of the ordinary way of progress in human understanding. As such, *we must learn to institutionalize dissent and profit from it*.

I say this with considerable confidence, born of backing from a well-known continental thinker. He wrote: "The structure of a human community is correct only if it admits not just the presence of a justified opposition, but also that effectiveness of opposition which is required by the common good and the right of participation." These words of Karol Wojtyla in *The Acting Person* are no less true of the church than of any community.

Is dissent a form of loyalty or a liability? It can be the latter (when irresponsible in form), but it should be the former. From my perspective it is an outcome, not a first-foot forward, aggressive starting-point. It is a normal outcome—even if infrequent—of an attempt to assimilate in a pilgrim and imperfect church, one which realizes that just as it is *in via* and can only imperfectly symbolize the coming reality of the Kingdom, so too its formulations of its convictions are always *in via*.

Christ did not promise us that as individuals we would always be right when deliberating about the practical implications of "being in Christ." He did not even promise that so-called "official teaching" would always be right. We know it hasn't been. He did say, *in the fact of our being a community of believers*, that there is no better way of walking a narrow path than to walk it together—with the combined eyes and strength and experience of the entire people, all supporting each other's charisms and gifts.

Is that risky? Yes. Is the risk avoidable? No. Is that sufficient for us? It is what God, through his incarnate Word, has left us. It is sufficient—for in God we trust. □

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*Richard Alleva*

# A RISK WORTH TAKING

*Scorsese's 'Kundun'*

What is it about Buddhism that elicits the child in sophisticated European and American directors? The reverence toward every living thing? The reliance on anecdote and legends to teach truths? The time-tripping of reincarnation? In any event, though Bernardo Bertolucci's *Little Buddha* was mostly dreadful, its forty-five-minute rendition of the story of Prince Siddharta was as limpid and joyous as the best children's picture book. Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Seven Years in Tibet* may or may not have been historically accurate, but it scored as a boy's adventure story that H. Rider Haggard would have approved. And now Martin Scorsese's *Kundun*, the life of the Dalai Lama from boyhood until his exile from Tibet, proves to be, at its best, more lyrical and more tender than any other movie by this director. (Significantly, the screenwriter and instigator of the project was Melissa Mathison, who wrote the best children's movies of the last quarter century, *E.T.* and *The Black Stallion*.)

Of course, the maker of *The Age of Innocence* and *The Last Temptation of Christ* had already proved his ability to range widely in subject matter, but always this obsessive has been drawn to other obsessives. *Kundun*'s protagonist is different: a hero elected by fate, abashed by his responsibilities and his powers of clairvoyance, who modestly watches himself rising to the historical occasion when his country is menaced by China. And Scorsese tempers his cinematic style to the quality of his hero. This movie has a glinting beauty and a steady, perhaps too steady, tempo. It never bores yet it never makes you catch your breath. It evinces sympathy yet it's also diffident, even a little opaque. I would call it cool in the sense of the old Indian word, *nibbuta*, "the sense of being cool after a fever." All of Scorsese's other films run temperatures of 105, but *Kundun* is strictly *nibbuta*.

For me, most of the best scenes are in the first half-hour, when the child is discovered by Tibet's regent to be the fourteenth Dalai Lama and taken to the central monastery for education and eventual enthronement. We see through the boy's eyes, and Scorsese's virtuosic panning is strictly anchored to the wonderment the boy feels as his roving eyes fasten on one thing after another: the gleaming, candle-lit faces of the monks as they examine the child for signs of holiness; the rich material of his new shoes; a mouse drinking with impunity from goblets of water on an altar. Like the child, the camera beautifully notices.

Also good is the paradoxical relationship of little Kundun (the name given to all the Dalai Lamas) to the adults who are both in charge and in awe of him. The monks must chide him when he doesn't study, yet, a moment after scolding, they hang on his every word. Even more poignant is the boy's relationship with his parents, pious Buddhists who feel both blessed and nonplussed that their son has turned out to be the avatar of the compassionate Buddha. Even after Kundun's selection, his father slaps the imp who plucks a hair from the paternal moustache, but then feels obliged to apologize.

*Kundun* doesn't deteriorate after these early magical sequences, but rather it levels off. It's difficult to dramatize a nonviolent hero's resistance to tyranny. China advances, the Dalai Lama urges firmness without bloodshed. Officials bully, the Dalai Lama sits mute. Slaughter takes place, the Dalai Lama's face is filled with anguish. It's not that nonviolent resistance is in itself nondramatic, but the seesaw pattern of violent provocation and tacit response is monotonous. I felt I was watching a stormy ocean thundering against a great smooth wall. No matter how violent the waves, the wall remains smooth, smooth, smooth.

The problem becomes clear by contrast when there occurs a scene of high drama near the end of the movie. Kundun has gone to China to negotiate with Mao, and the tyrant has just about convinced the Tibetan leader that communism can coexist peacefully, even fruitfully, with Buddhism. Then there is a final interview and the mask slips. "You must understand," the chairman purrs with oleaginous certitude as he shifts his bulk on a settee a little closer to his "honored" guest, "that all religions are poison...the opiate of the people." That little sideways slide, as menacing as any death threat in a Scorsese Mafioso movie, lets Kundun and us know that compromise won't work. The glint of danger, the flash of insight, the change of destiny—these are dramatic in a way that's absent from much of the movie.

Three of the greatest technical artists

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alive—cinematographer Roger Deakins, designer Dante Ferretti, and editor Thelma Schoonmaker—helped Scorsese to a visual exquisiteness that never becomes pompous or pseudo-mystical. And some of the most memorable shots aren't spectacular ones of nature or war but odd, sneaky glances and telling gestures: Kundun staring down with wonder at the beautiful shoes he can now wear after a childhood of poverty; our hero, riding through Peking, innocently enjoying a Red Chinese children's chorus, only to have the performance cut short by his more savvy adviser who recognizes propagandistic drivel when he hears it and politely rolls up the window.

But Scorsese has also made some miscalculations. While Kundun's father's corpse is, according to custom, chopped up and fed to vultures, the director has Mao's imperialistic demands read on the soundtrack, which seems to present a glib, false parallel between a sacred rite (no matter how grisly to our Western eyes) and the brutal dismemberment of a country. When the Dalai Lama dreams of the slaughter of his people, Scorsese positions the ruler amid a mass of blood-drenched corpses and pulls the camera back into a distant overhead shot that turns the welter of bodies into a Jackson Pollock painting. It's an overly aesthetic effect, something the director generally avoids. And the last sequence of Kundun's escape from his enemies into India has too many slow-motion shots and gnomic utterances on the soundtrack. This turns the escape into something lyrical instead of the passage through purgatory that the climax requires.

The acting of nonprofessionals in all roles is mostly wonderful but in the lead role of the grown Kundun, Tenzin Thyjthob Tsarong demonstrates the limits of the amateur actor, even when he's physically appealing and apt. Tsarong is perfect in his scenes with the Red generals whose bureaucratic huffing amusingly contrasts with the spiritual leader's calm certitude. But when the Dalai Lama must express his anguish, Scorsese can only have Tsarong hide his face and shake his shoulders. These heavy-handed directorial tricks are meant to cover the fact that the nonprofessional can't really produce the requisite emotion.

Yet this film is quite an achievement for Scorsese, a step forward because it's a step sideways. It is as uncharacteristic of his other works as *Hard Times* was for Dickens, as the "Old Possum" poems were for Eliot. Only a truly major, fertile artist dares not to be himself. □

BOOKS

# Abracadabra

**The Magician's Wife**
***Brian Moore***
*Dutton/A William Abrahams Book, $23.95, 240 pp*

**Celia Wren**

The Empire must be a succession of miracles," a minister once remarked to the French monarch, Napoleon III. Of the same mind himself, the emperor turned the Second Empire into a spectacle radiating *faux* imperial glamour. Epitomizing the decadence of his regime were the annual *séries*, week-long, glorified house parties held at the palace at Compiègne. Each autumn, members of various élites—aristocrats, socialites, artists, politicians, etc.—were invited to Compiègne, assigned rooms according to status, and required to adhere to a rigorous agenda of dressing, dining, watching hounds devour the entrails of hunted stags, and other social niceties.

The prolific Brian Moore introduces us to the intriguing eponymous heroine of his new novel by following her through the frivolities and veiled maneuvering of a *série*. Napoleon III's invitation shatters a period of tedium and melancholy for the clear-headed Emmeline, the wife of the celebrated French illusionist Henri Lambert. The magician's marriage, ironically, has lost its magic. The *coup de théâtre* that united the two partners—they met when Lambert summoned Emmeline from an audience and produced a bouquet from the folds of her scarf—has faded to a distant memory, and Emmeline feels ignored by her preoccupied husband, who has taken to sleeping alone.

She is also bored: After his years of diverting European high society, Lambert has retired to a Tours estate to work on the uncanny mechanical figurines that terrify visiting tradesmen. Lonely, and ill-at-ease amidst her husband's clockwork attendants, Emmeline is left to brood over her recent miscarriages.

*"I wish you'd empty your pockets before you put things in the wash."*



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This state of semiretirement ends when Napoleon III puts together a bizarre political scheme: eager to quell rebellion in Algeria, France's partially conquered territory, he decides to send Lambert to perform there, in the hopes of convincing the Algerians that France has a great sorcerer on its side. If all goes well, Lambert's technologically advanced *legerdemain* (it makes use of electricity) will amaze and dishearten followers of the local Islamic holy men, in particular the charismatic mystic known as Bou-Aziz, who is on the verge of declaring a *jihad* to defeat the infidel French. The ambitious Lambert accepts this mission in person at Compiègne, and the novel's panorama of *décolletage*, *foie gras*, velvet-suited *postillions*, Sèvres porcelain, and candlelit Gautier recitations gives way to the spare expanse of the North African desert.

But Algeria, too, has its luminaries and social protocol, as Emmeline soon discovers. The two principal settings in *The Magician's Wife* (whose plot is based on a real historical incident) allow Moore to draw an implicit parallel between French and Arab cultures, whose elaborate ceremonies, in both cases, barely veil the rigid structures holding power in place. The descriptions of Compiègne and of Algeria are richly atmospheric and full of sensuous detail, but through Emmeline's wary gaze we see more than Second Empire trellises and frescoed ceilings, more than the Moorish towns with their alleys and orange trees and the camel caravans stealing across the Sahara. Emmeline's perception combines the wonder of the tourist with a fledgling ability to monitor political subtext, like a novice Kremlinologist.

Her observations increasingly make Emmeline doubt the good faith of the French Empire. Napoleon III, she finds, is a rouged libertine. And the Lamberts' guide in Algeria, a courteous Arab expert named Colonel Deniau, who speaks of the spiritualism of the desert, turns out to be a political opportunist willing to help France wipe out Arab civilization. Even before leaving France, she begins to doubt the very underpinnings of her own culture. Observing Mass at Compiègne the morning after the *curée*—the solemn presentation of a deer carcass to the emperor's hounds—she sees the kneeling empress as the hostess who had "presided over the satanic celebration of the kill," and thinks "not of the blood of Christ, but of the bloody spectacle of last night, the red, tarry torches flaming in the darkness, the growling hounds, their jaws flecked with blood."

By contrast, in Islamic devotion, Emmeline finds a real piety. On meeting the Emperor's paramount local enemy, Bou-Aziz, she senses that he possesses true wisdom and holiness. The question of the day for the French ambassadors as well as the North Africans is whether Bou-Aziz will declare himself the "Mahdi," a messianic spiritual and temporal leader foretold in Islamic tradition. If he does, the region will erupt in war. Made an unwilling partner in Lambert's conjuring act, which she now considers an elaborate fraud rather than a piece of artistry, Emmeline finds herself


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tempted to betray her husband and her country.

Despite the scenes of brittle diplomacy and the menace of future war, *The Magician's Wife* is not the most suspenseful of Moore's novels; the measured development of scenes, with their pellucid descriptions and delicate exploration of political dynamics, makes the pace seem cautious. But like Henri Lambert, Moore is a magician able to create an extraordinary vision with apparent effortlessness. In the story of the Lamberts' brief, near-tragic adventure, he has concocted a bewitching portrait of an era, and a tantalizing tour through exotic locales.

Most impressively, like *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, Moore's new novel is a masterly portrait of a woman in uncertainty. Emmeline's doubts, her moments of euphoria, her tortured meditations over scraps of conversation, her shrewd assessments of personality, her restrained anger and her more frequent resignation are all as convincing as any of the book's historical details. Moore does a particularly admirable job tracing the fluctuating warmth and chill of her prolonged, subtle flirtation with Deniau. Even though she only asserts herself at one, crucial point in the story, Emmeline never seems as passive as her actions might imply.

With her misgivings about French interference in Algeria and her respect for Arab civilization, Emmeline seems more astute than the conspiring diplomats who surround her. Where they envision expansive glory for the Second Empire, she foresees an Algeria tormented by oppression, ideological conflict, and violence. For the contemporary reader, her apprehension gives the novel an ironic twist. □

**Celia Wren** *is* Commonweal*'s theater critic.*

# MEDIUM WITH A MESSAGE

**Marshall McLuhan**
**Escape Into Understanding, A Biography**
***W. Terrence Gordon***
*Basic Books, $35, 465 pp.*

**Frank McConnell**

If "Media Studies" has a father or a godfather, it's surely H. Marshall McLuhan (1911–80). Not that he invented the field: Plato, I think, did that in his distinction between speech and writing in the *Phaedrus*. And in our century there were earlier and brilliant analyses, including Eric Barnouw's studies of broadcasting and Harold Innis's epochal work on the influence of print on the shaping of modern consciousness (work absolutely essential to McLuhan's own best writing, and oddly—characteristically—soft-pedaled in Gordon's book). But McLuhan made it all sexy, imbued it all with an aura of freedom and *play*.

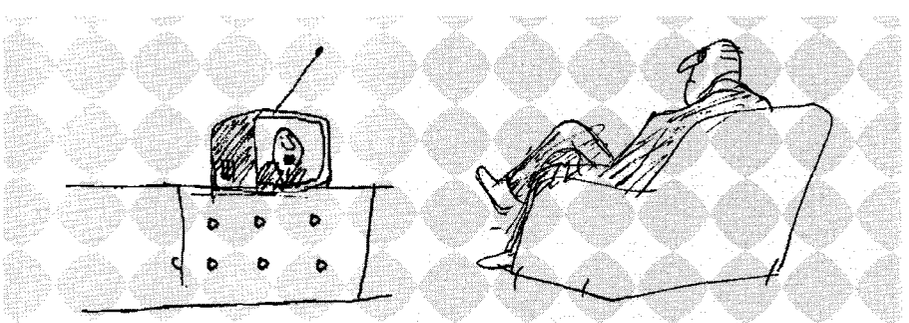
He wrote, co-wrote, or edited over twenty books, plus hundreds of essays and speeches; the Centre for Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto, his home school, was founded mainly as an adjunct to his personal and apparently inexhaustible, research; and from the midsixties to early seventies he was, if not as inescapable as the Beatles, considerably more so than the Kinks (who were as good as the Beatles).

It was the wimpy professor's dream (and McLuhan, whose work I venerate enormously, *was*, also, a wimpy professor) to have his erudite and/or vatic mutterings published *and* to find them celebrated in the Big World. McLuhan's mother had been a successful performance artist, and it rubbed off on her boy. He was a kind of genius, yes; but also a tireless self-promoter and a flamboyant showman (which does not mean "charlatan"). And without his flamboyance, it's doubtful that "Media Studies" would have the cachet it currently enjoys in the universities.

The irony is that "Media Studies," as practiced now, has little to do with, and cares little about, McLuhan's crucial insights. It is largely a dreary exercise in discovering the ways media "disenfranchize" or—these guys' favorite word—"disempower" marginalized groups.

And that's not what McLuhan was about. Some of the best of Gordon's book explains how his man's obsession with media was tied to his deep, ferocious Catholicism (McLuhan converted in 1937).

Born in Edmonton, Alberta, to a devoutly Methodist woman, by his college years McLuhan was a voracious and intense reader—his first great passion being, significantly, Chesterton. On a fellowship to Cambridge, his Catholic enthusiasms expanded to, among others, Aquinas (he always described himself as a Thomist), Gilson, Eliot, and the Joyce of *Finnegans Wake*. Now, the *Summa Theologiae* and the *Wake* may seem an odd pairing—and McLuhan was to become famous for odd, outrageous pairings of ideas—but Gordon helps us see how it makes perfect sense in terms of the man's religious convic-



*"How would you like to be part of the big picture?"*



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tion and of the core brilliance of his work on media.

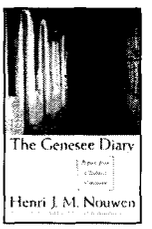
McLuhan's Catholicism was strongly pentecostal, in the sense that he sought, and found, in the church the Real Presence in the sense of the *community* of believers, rather than in the—to him, Protestant—idea of an individual, intensely private relationship with God. (I think that as a daily communicant, he would have loved the innovation of having the whole congregation stand during the Consecration: everyone, not just the priest, performs the act. And remember that "HCE," the name of the *Wake*'s hero, means, among other things, "Here Comes Everybody!")

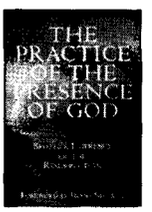
Furthermore, he came to believe, with Innis, Max Weber, and R.H. Tawney, that the invention of print (1450), with its attendant results of privativization of reading, standardization, and "flattening" of cultural differences, was a prime occasion, if not cause, of both the Reformation and of the rise of capitalism. So the *Summa* could be read as a "pre-Gutenberg" celebration of the faith of an immense and variegated community, and the *Wake* as a "post-Gutenberg" expectation of the return of that community at the end of the era of print-oriented, "protestant" individualism. Film, radio, and especially TV (first used in 1936, by the way, as Joyce was writing the *Wake*) were as world-making as the Gutenberg revolution just because they heralded the abolition of the privacy of the book and the reemergence of a communal, visual *and* aural *and* tactile space: a "global village," to invoke what is probably McLuhan's most famous phrase.

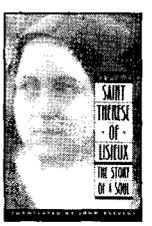
But if that were the whole story, McLuhan would be simply an interesting crank with a few good ideas. As Gordon, again, makes clear, there was more. McLuhan's two most influential teachers at Cambridge were F.R. Leavis and I.A. Richards, among the founders of what would be called the New Criticism. And the central tenet of New Criticism is that the critic's job is *not* to indulge in moral or philosophical generalities about the work examined (novel, poem, or medium), but to attempt to analyze it *as it really is* ("close reading," now largely scorned in lit departments, is the new critic's one thing needful). And that—never mind that Leavis and Richards were materialists—is a distinctly privatized, "protestant" approach to reading.

So McLuhan became a visionary Catholic pentecostal with a close, precise habit of attention to his subject, a prophet with scruples, and scrupulous prophets are rare, maddening—and of immense value.

Of all his books, the two that somehow *are* Marshall McLuhan appeared two years apart: *The Gutenberg Galaxy* in 1962 and *Understanding Media* in 1964. And the creative tension between his "catholic" and "protestant" imaginations, the visionary of renewed *communitas* (or commonweal?) and Methodist, private, close reader, is wonderfully present in these books. Electronic media may create for us a global village; *but* electronic man is "discarnate man," so what can the Incarnation possibly mean to him; the book is being replaced by the





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virtual reality of the Tube, *but* the Tube conveys, mostly, crap; "the medium *is* the message"; but what *is* the message?

McLuhan could probably not have been, and surely was not, a systematic thinker. His books are hardly books at all, but collections of aphorisms, insights—"probes," he liked to call them. His lyrical ambivalence about the new media is, I think, his great value. He looked unflinchingly at new modes of communication that increasingly define our sense of self, and tried to read them as what they are, and what they imply for our common, and spiritual, life.

My main quarrel with Terrence Gordon's very fine book is that he elides the contradictions implicit in McLuhan's work. Gordon is an unabashed admirer of his subject, so naturally wants McLuhan to appear in complete control of his insights. But it ain't so. And thank God. A self-assured McLuhan is not a McLuhan I can use; his edginess is almost the content of his work (the medium being, after all, the message). And, when Gordon discusses the frequent critics of McLuhan's work, he—more hagiographer than biographer now—always assumes that they just "didn't understand" what the man was saying. Well: sometimes they did; and often their criticisms were right. You don't set off as many conceptual firecrackers as McLuhan did without having a lot of misfires. □

**Frank McConnell,** Commonweal*'s media critic, teaches English at the University of California, Santa Barbara.*

# TOO HIP FOR ITS OWN GOOD

**The Conquest of Cool**
**Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism**
***Thomas Frank***
*University of Chicago Press, $22.95, 287 pp.*

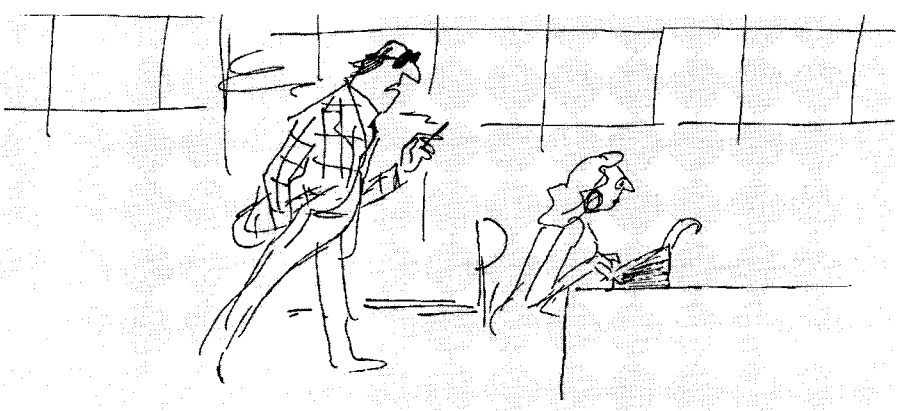
**Eugene McCarraher**

"Here's to the crazies," Oscar-winning actor Richard Dreyfuss shills in the latest Apple commercial. A montage of rebels, the ad pays homage to those brazen mavericks who have "challenged the status quo" and extended the bounds of possibility. Einstein, King, Gandhi, Branson, Isadora Duncan, Ted Turner—rewind that, please. Branson? He's the CEO of the Virgin Group of companies. Ted Turner, mogul of CNN? Correct me if I'm wrong, but aren't *they* the status quo?

The ad suggests just how untrammeled the cultural authority of corporate business is at the end of the twentieth century. In the nineties—the 1890s, that is—the names of Morgan, Carnegie, or Rockefeller were as revered among the cigar-smoking classes as those of Gates, Geffen, or Murdoch are among their health-conscious descendants. Yet the robber barons also moved millions to join unions, form farmers' alliances, and vote for radical parties; strike the railroads and the coal mines; create a progressive tradition and preach a social gospel; and otherwise resist the nailing of America to a cross of gold. Today's barons have recast themselves as democrats, philanthropists, *revolutionaries*. They "empower" us, they "provide" us with jobs, they even "rebel" for us, encouraging our every "creative," "rule-breaking" act of material consumption as an assault on the Bastille of "conformity."

How did corporate Bourbons become our model Jacobins? Thomas Frank tries to explain in his brilliant, polemically charged, though ultimately unsatisfying account of business culture in the 1960s. A contributing reporter to the *Nation*, *In These Times*, and other periodicals, Frank is also the editor of the *Baffler*, a Chicago-based journal that features some of the most biting and well-written cultural criticism of the present day. The key move in Frank's study—one that also turns out to be its key weakness—is to look at business rather than the "counterculture." Taking us into boutiques, boardrooms, and executive suites, Frank chronicles two contemporaneous transformations: the "Creative Revolution" in advertising and the "Peacock Revolution" in the menswear industry. Rejecting a straightforward "cooptation thesis"—the increasingly conventional wisdom that business "stole" an authentically oppositional movement against consumer capitalism—Frank argues that business itself anticipated and embraced the vaunted "counterculture" with the open arms of "hip" and "cool."

The story begins in the gray-flanneled 1950s. Advertising then was, Frank tells us, a downright dreary business, staffed with ulcerated, creatively inhibited time-servers, and constricted by a corporate culture that dictated deference to clients and a rigid imaginative conservatism.



*"I'm rethinking Lincoln. I see him with a ponytail."*



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Full of happy families enraptured by their standardized commodities, the imagery of postwar advertising was, in Frank's words, "fatuous in the extreme"—and, more to the point, "transparently so to much of the audience it aimed to persuade." The menswear industry was a similar dullard's paradise, marked by sartorial blandness and threatened by declining sales of suits, jackets, and trousers.

But along came an energetic band of visionaries advancing an in-house critique of corporate culture every bit as pungent as the more celebrated attacks on mass culture by David Riesman, William H. Whyte, and Vance Packard. (Frank usefully reminds us that criticism of mass culture was "if not populist, enormously popular.") Emboldened by new management theories that celebrated "flexibility" and "empowerment" and demonized hierarchy and bureaucracy, and determined to break the creative and accumulative shackles of "conformity" and soulless routine, admen in agencies such as DDB and BBDO overthrew the three-martini culture by challenging clients and founding the apparently free-wheeling symbolic order that now defines American advertising. Their counterparts in menswear (especially the young turks at *Gentleman's Quarterly*) sparked a parallel rebellion in numerous design offices. The new breed's genius lay in directly incorporating public disgust with commercialism and consumerism into advertisements, conjuring "hip" as a cultural alchemy that converted the gold of popular skepticism into the dross of accelerated consumption. From the now-classic Volkswagen ads to the "Pepsi Generation" campaigns, the masters of "hip" addressed desires for freedom, novelty, and variety as matters, not of political and creative power in the workplace, but of purchasing power in leisure time. "Alienated by the conformity and hypocrisy of mass society?" as Frank cracks at one point—"Have we got a car for you!" In offering itself as the antidote to business routine, business transformed "the strategies of consumerism, the ideology by which business explained its domination of the national life."


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Even more significant, the corporate avant-garde prefigured the "counterculture's" attacks on inflexible organizations, manners, and morals. The new managerial ideologies antedated countercultural and New Left calls for "participatory democracy," while the irreverence and irony extolled by the new advertisers preceded the "new morality" of self-fulfillment and open-ended commitment. "Admen looked at the counterculture and saw themselves," Frank observes, and even hailed the young hipsters as comrades in a cultural revolution.

Thus, far from demolishing capitalism, the moral revolution of the 1960s inaugurated a new phase in its cultural history, with consumption repackaged as "rebellion" and daily life choreographed as a "self-perpetuating pageant of workplace deference and advertising outrage." In an age of layoffs, weak unions, and the hypermobility of capital, "hip" is the latest souped-up cultural vehicle of corporate authority, "the public philosophy of the age of flexible accumulation." It vanquishes dissent by absorbing and defusing it—find your own road in a Saab, do some "independent thinking" with our investment firm—and deals with the memory of historical and contemporary injustice by removing it from the shelves of the cultural storehouse. It dictates, Frank notes, that we inhabit a cultural landscape strewn with liberated prudes, horrified church ladies, and healthy hedonists whose counterfeit resistance-through-consumption merely augments and ratifies the wealth and power of business.

Frank's portrayal of cooptation is now fairly common on the Left; indeed, it has a rather old and venerable pedigree, extending from Malcolm Cowley's account of Greenwich Village bohemianism in *Exile's Return* (1934) down to Herbert Marcuse's notion of "repressive de-sublimation." Yet by eschewing the bogus populism of business elites to focus on their moral and symbolic power, Frank makes an important contribution to the cultural history of the 1960s. He also provides a needed (if not altogether original) corrective to "cultural studies" mavens who see "subversion" in every market-researched *epater* of the *bourgeoisie*.

Still, in his laudable eagerness to "hold the beloved counterculture to the harsh light of historical and economic scrutiny," Frank blinds himself to its variety, complexity, and endurance. It's all too common to remember "the counterculture" as a morass of sexual and pharmaceutical self-indulgence, and it's all too easy and misleading to yoke it to moral and intellectual lightweights like Timothy Leary, Jerry Rubin, and Charles Reich. But there was more, much more, to the "counterculture" than Frank's Day-Glo caricature suggests. There were many regions in that still largely uncharted historical terrain—communal living, organic farming, and ecological awareness, to name a few—and they housed more genuinely provocative minds than Reich—Theodore Roszak, Ivan Illich, and E. F. Schumacher, to name a few.

These three pointed toward technologically decentralized, ecologically sen-

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sitive, and spiritually informed ways of life. They indicted the culture of consumption, not so much for its inequality and "materialism," but more for its fostering abstracting and utilitarian practices toward ourselves and the rest of creation. Surely, much of their vision of "the simple life" has been commodified into nutribars and Birkenstock sandals. But some kind of "simplicity"—one which, like the asceticism of old, aims at restoring a genuine love and pleasure in our relation to the material world—remains an indispensable source of freedom from the tyranny of cool. □

**Eugene McCarraher,** *when not drinking coffee at Starbucks, teaches history at the University of Delaware.*

## CORRESPONDENCE

*(Continued from page 4)*

mission statement called "actualization" of the biblical text. There are many works of *haute vulgarisation* that expose the spiritual value of the literal sense, and also succeed in applying it meaningfully to modern circumstances, "actualizing" it.

5. Johnson's examples are all from the New Testament, understandably for that is an area of his expertise. Both testaments have their "otherness," but especially is this true of the Old, which is often reduced to a Christological meaning (*see* also "the Bible II," as in your cartoon on page 3). Typology and allegory are associated with reading "for wisdom and delight," but do they really appeal to the modern Catholic? Should not one expose the spiritual experience of/in the text (for example, psalms) as more compelling and fruitful? Readers can go through the literal historical sense to arrive at a spiritual and responsible meaning for today. By no means is a "Catholic" approach to be identified (and Johnson does not say that it should) with the patristic and medieval use of typology and allegory. Personally, I was delighted by Origen on the Song of Songs, but married Catholics will resonate more to the interpretation of the Song as inspired love poetry between a man and a woman—granted that this does not exhaust the meaning of the Song, as illustrated by the *Spiritual Canticle* of the Carmelite friar, Saint John of the Cross.

6. Are Catholic biblical scholars influenced by academe? Of course, but also by the Catholic church tradition and ethos. They don't have two heads. Bultmann said it: There is no understanding without a pre-understanding.

7. As for the "impasse facing the historical-critical method" (your summary on the contents page): There is no impasse, but simply the realization that the "method" has (always had) limitations but is not to be blamed for something that it could never deliver. Does it retain a certain primacy? Yes, it is "indispensable."

Thanks for a lively and thoughtful article. ROLAND E. MURPHY, O.CARM.
*Washington, D.C.*

*From the Editors:* Luke Timothy Johnson will respond to the Reverend Murphy and other writers in a future issue.


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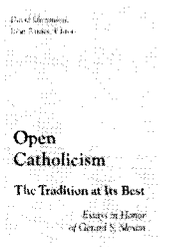


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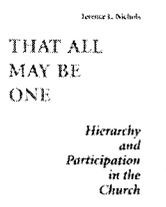


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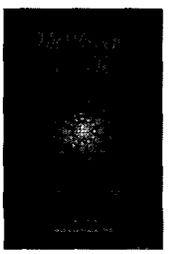

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# THE SCREAM

*Dianna Ortiz*

A survivor of political violence is often revisited by memories when least expected. Some time ago I was sitting next to a young woman on a plane who told me of her dreams of becoming a painter. She had visited a museum in Oslo. One painting in particular had captured her attention. She spoke with enthusiasm of the painting's color composition, simplicity, clarity. What she did not mention was the subject matter.

The painting, Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, is quite familiar to me. But as that bright young woman described it, in one terrifying moment I witnessed again the unrelenting clutches of torture.

Dear young artist, dear fellow human-being—can you not see? This painting that you passionately describe is my *life*, the life of every woman, child, man who has been subjected to torture. Can you not hear the cries coming from those terrified souls? Can no one hear them but those of us who have survived this hell?

Jacobo Timerman, tortured in Argentina, remembers someone in the next cell, a man he never saw. What Timerman remembers is the wracking cough, until one day it stopped. I remember the screams. I *was* that scream. I heard, I *saw* the screams of people being tortured. I assure you, that scream etches itself into one's eternal memory. I remember this and much, much more.

I remember the night I died, when the screams of other people were muffled, falling, finally, into dead silence. I was taken to a place where there is no more pain. But the Angel of Death passed me by. I was not one of those lucky enough to close my eyes; instead I was reborn in an instant. I remember it: no beliefs, no values, no friends, no family, no memory. I was witness to that rebirth, not innocent as some newborn, but fatally flawed, born in the image of those who raped and tortured me. I remember the scream that only I could hear.

Later, I remember how people, blind to torture and its effects, looked at me, as if I were a mad woman who had just popped out of Freud's notebook, while others were convinced that I was feeling sorry for myself. Others advised me to forgive and forget. But can one forget, even momentarily, that which was, and that which still is? Elie Wiesel says, "To forget would be an absolute injustice....To forget would be the enemy's triumph....The enemy kills, tortures, and disappears twice—the second time, in trying to obliterate the traces of his crime." Forget? We have neither the freedom nor the right to forget.

When individuals become the target of political violence, their worlds crumble. The damage done to the basic foundation is so severe that the pillars of one's life come crashing down. There is nothing life-giving left. Trust in one's self, in humanity, and in God is shattered. The survivor feels more kin to the dead than to the living. We are left with fear, guilt, humiliation, helplessness, shame, nightmares, flashbacks, hideous memories. This is the survivors' world, a world we wish to flee.

In that darkness, where so many have stood and continue to stand, transfixed by paralyzing fear, there flickers the faint light of a candle, the Marjorie Kovler Center. The Center exists as a sanctuary for survivors of torture, and for their families. At Kovler, we are lifted when we fall, cared for in our brokenness, empowered to take the most daring of all risks—to live.

How has Kovler been a healing presence for so many of us? Sometimes the past, like the future, is too painful to face. Survivors of torture find themselves bombarded with the most intrusive memories. The smell of cigarettes, the sight of a policeman, the barking of a dog, or simple eye contact can trigger memories of the torture chamber. Like many survivors, I adopted behaviors to protect myself from these memories. I would drink twenty cups of coffee to avoid the nightmares that came with sleep. Bathing frequently, I would use A-Jax and bleach to disinfect myself. I was contaminated by what my torturers had done to me. But at Kovler, I came to realize that my behavior was not abnormal, that I was not mad. Can you imagine what that meant? I was, I am *normal*.

Survivors of political violence emerge from an environment of total control, victimized and powerless. But Kovler recognizes something that we believed had been lost forever: the inner strength that our torturers and all their allies have not destroyed. It was at Kovler that I, and countless others, first came to see ourselves not as victims but as survivors, fragile and broken perhaps, but very much alive.

To Kovler come survivors of political violence, dipped with the colors of despair. We reproduce *The Scream* with our lives. We come mute, desperately seeking a way to unleash the silent screams trapped within us. At Kovler, we recreate our shattered lives and deepen our alliance with those whom we have learned to trust. This strength, feeble at times, empowers us to confront our torturers and their allies, to use our experience to end the practice of torture.

Often times, I am asked what makes Kovler so special. Kovler heard my scream. To it, I owe my sanity, my life. It is a candle in the darkness. □

**Dianna Ortiz, O.S.U.,** *was abducted and tortured in Guatemala in 1989. This article is based on a presentation she gave at the tenth anniversary of Chicago's Marjorie Kovler Center for Survivors of Torture.*



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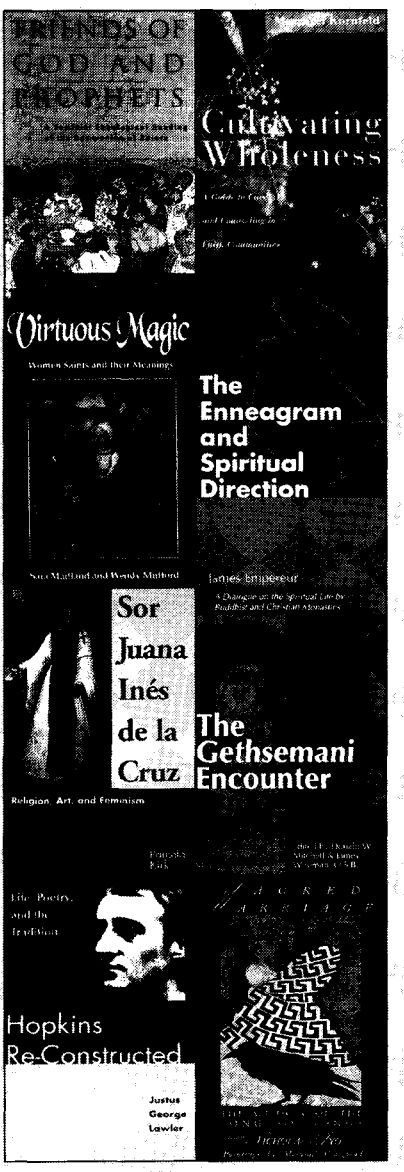


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